

BIRDS OF LAKE SIDE *and* PRAIRIE



EDWARD B CLARK

Smithsonian Institution
Libraries

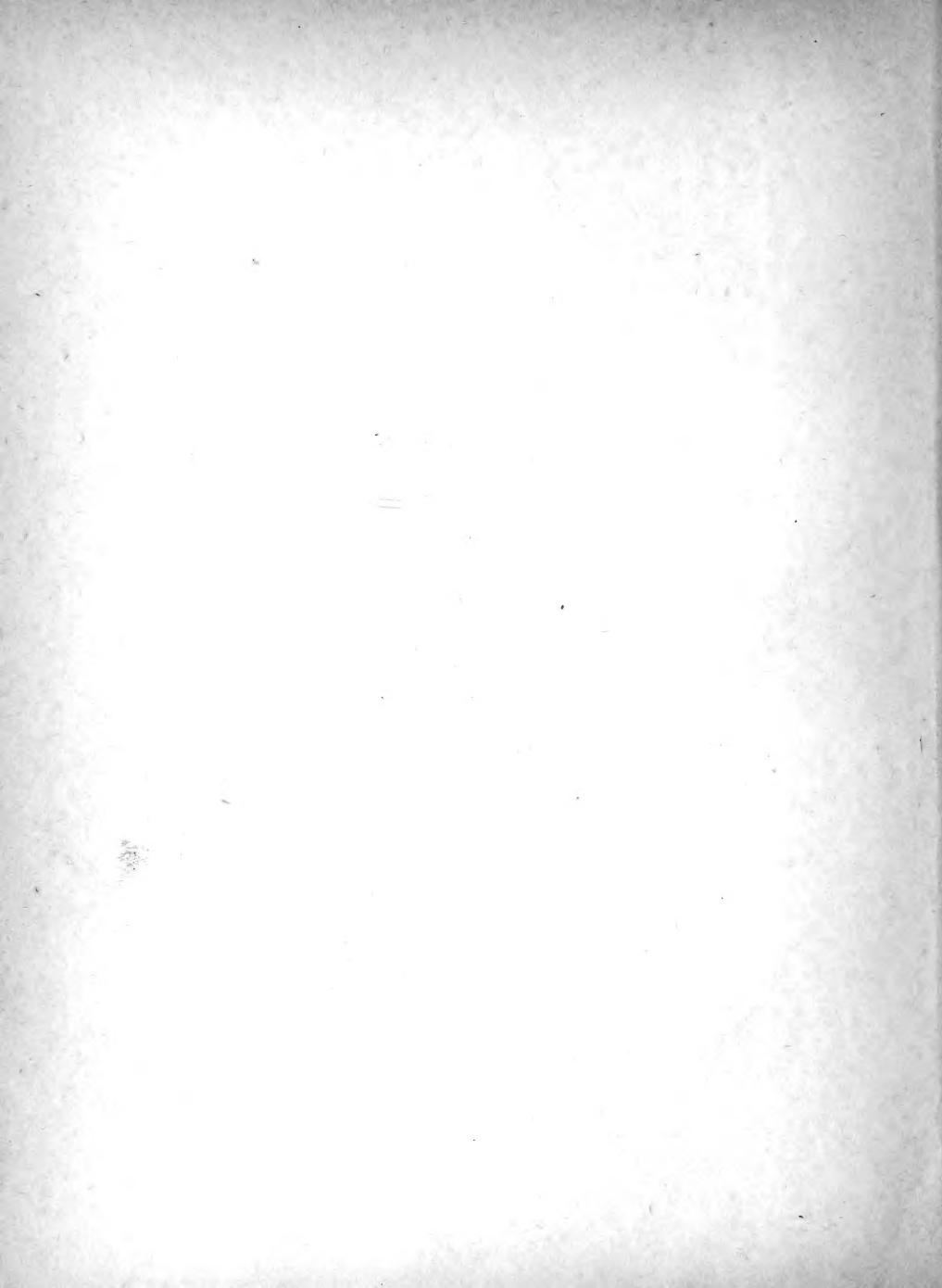


Alexander Wetmore
1946 *Sixth Secretary* 1953
&

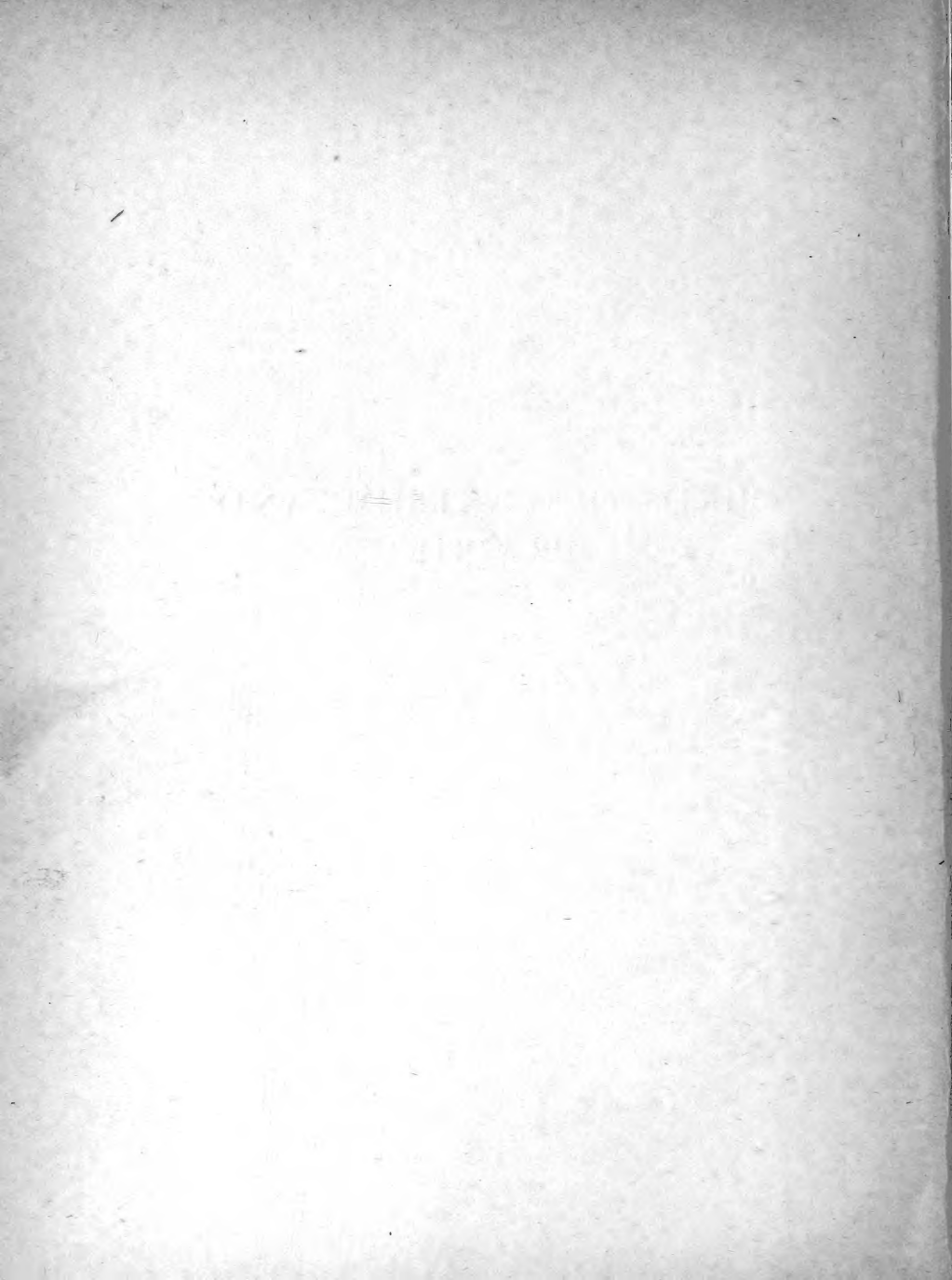
C. Wetmore

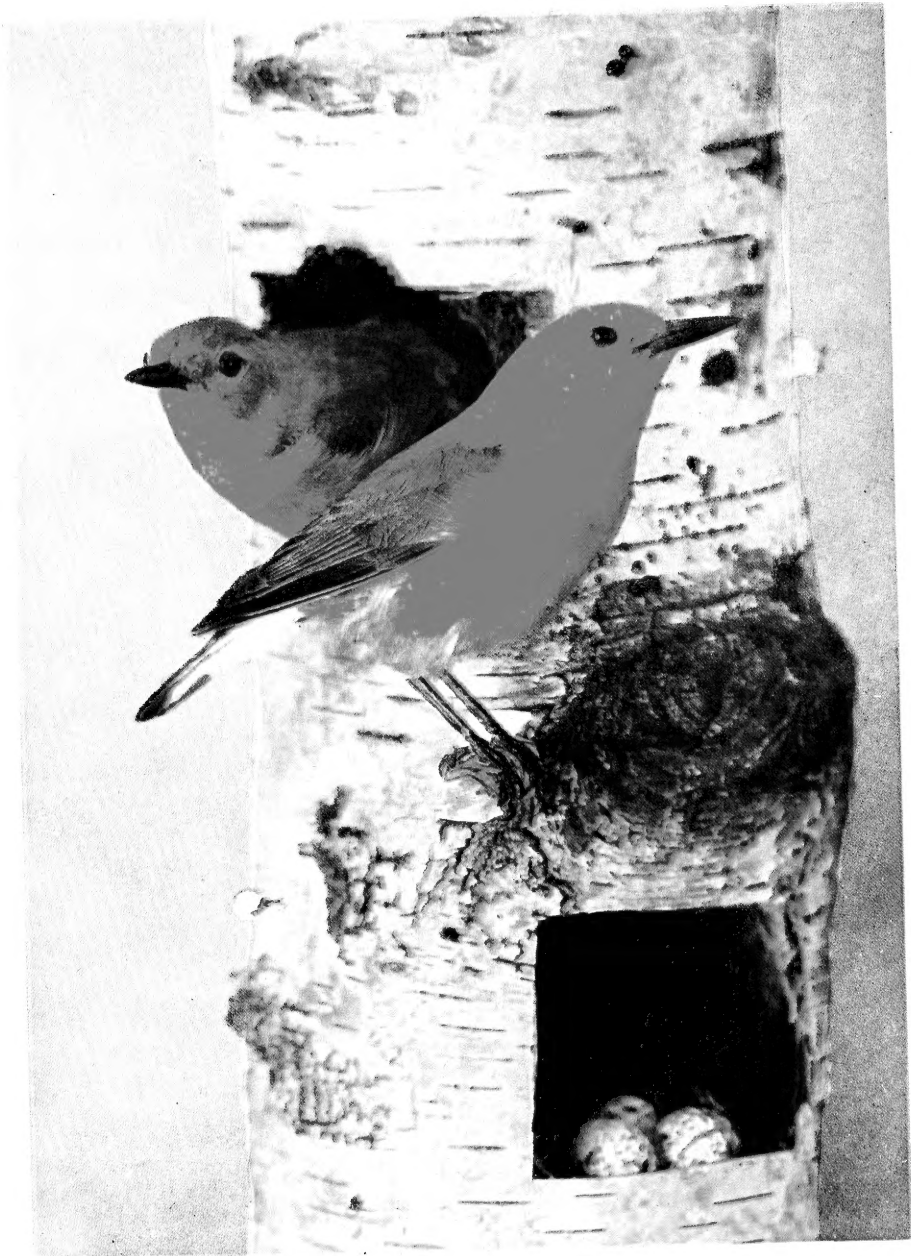
A-2

Kg



BIRDS OF LAKESIDE AND
PRAIRIE





PROTHONOTARY WARBLER.

676
258X
c.2
Birds

BIRDS OF LAKESIDE AND PRAIRIE

BY
EDWARD B. CLARK

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR



A. W. MUMFORD, PUBLISHER
CHICAGO NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1901

By A. W. MUMFORD

TO MY WIFE
WITHOUT WHOSE GENTLE PERSUASION
THIS BOOK
HAD NEVER BEEN WRITTEN



P R E F A C E

If the perusal of this little volume gives the reader one tithe of the pleasure which the gathering of the material gave the writer, the printing of the pages will not have been in vain. The lakesides and prairies of the Middle West are rich in bird life. The opera glass is a much more satisfactory field companion than the shot gun.

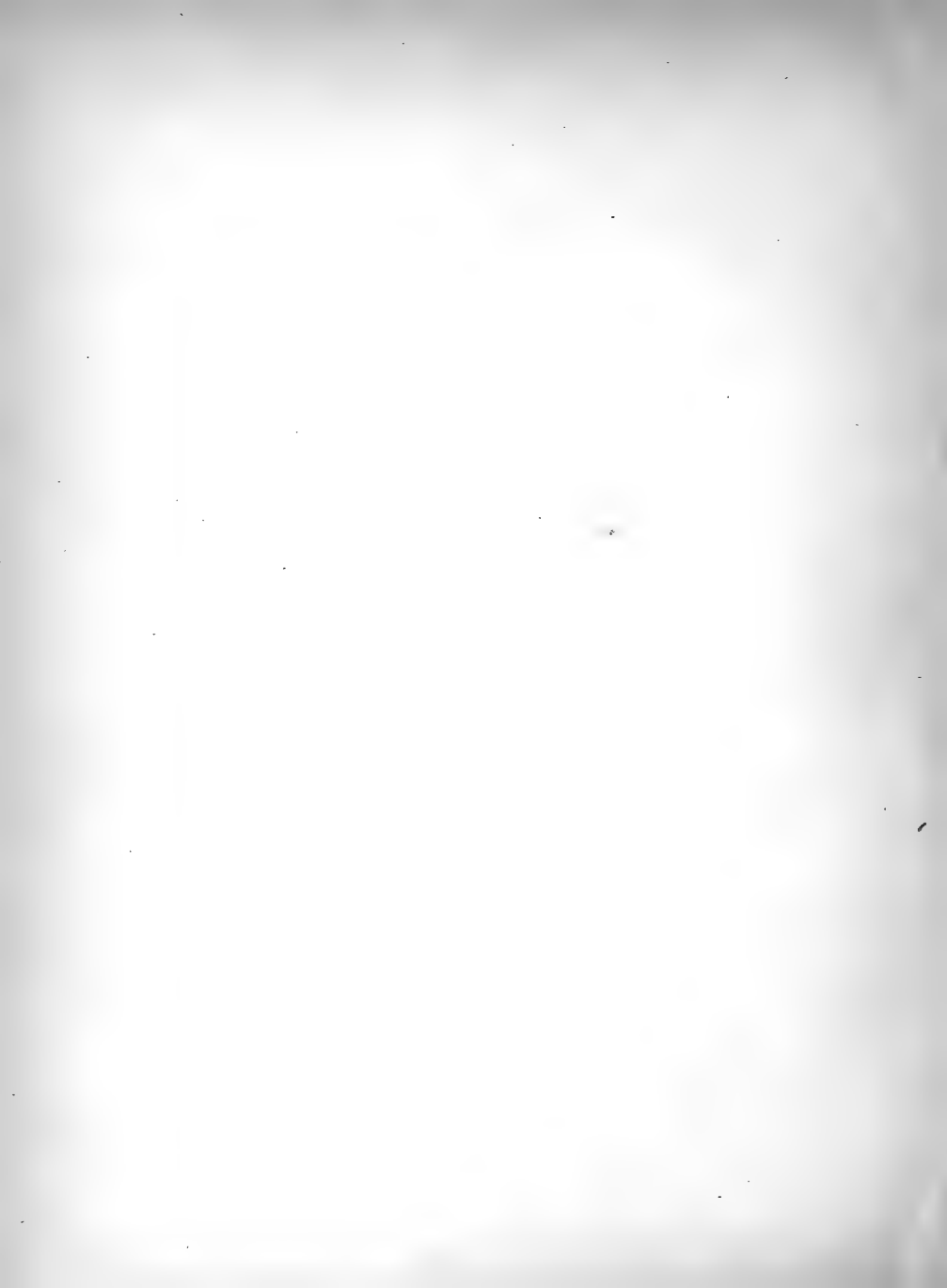
Parts of a few of the chapters have appeared in *Outing* of New York; *Birds and Nature*, the *Tribune*, the *Post*, and the *Record-Herald* of Chicago. My thanks are due to the Managing Editors of these publications for permission to reprint such portions of the articles as I desired.

EDWARD B. CLARK.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I BIRDS OF A SMOKY CITY - - -	9
II THE SONGSTERS OF THE SKOKIE - - -	19
III THROUGH THE LOST RIVER VALLEY - - -	29
IV IN SOUTHERN HOOSIER HILLS - - -	39
V IN WINTER FIELDS - - -	50
VI ON THE TRAIL OF POKAGON - - -	60
VII SOME ODD BITS OF BIRD LIFE - - -	68
VIII IN GOD'S ACRE - - -	78
IX WHERE THE BLACK TERN BUILDS - - -	87
X COMEDY AND TRAGEDY - - -	97
XI SPRING ON THE KANKAKEE - - -	106
XII "FROM HAUNTS OF COOT AND HERN" - - -	116
XIII THE REACHES OF THE PRAIRIE - - -	129
XIV G. N. SHRIKE, BUTCHER - - -	139



ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR

	PAGE
PROTHONOTARY WARBLER - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CERULEAN WARBLER - - - -	17
DICKCISSEL - - - - -	27
TUFTED TITMOUSE - - - -	38
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER - - -	49
GOLD FINCH - - - -	59
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH - - -	67
BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER - - -	77
EVENING GROSBEAK - - - -	86
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE - - - -	96
RED-EYED VIREO - - - -	105
WARBLING VIREO - - - -	115
MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT - - -	119
HOUSE WREN - - - -	130
BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER - -	138
GREAT NORTHERN SHRIKE - - - -	144

CHAPTER I

BIRDS OF A SMOKY CITY

The birds' true homes are in the green fields, the hedges, and the woodlands of the country, and the bird-student is fortunate whose lines are cast in such pleasant places throughout the entire year. The songsters, however, are not utterly neglectful of their city friends. To a creature whose life is passed in the freshness of the fields or in the fragrance of pine forests, there must be something pitiful in the condition of him whose daily round is one of grind and grime and noise.

The realist may frown if he will, yet the city-dwelling bird-student loves to think that it is some touch of tenderness that prompts the birds in spring and fall to turn aside from the broader migration paths to brighten with color and song the few green spots in the great bustling towns. No one who feels a desire to scrape acquaintance with the songsters should be kept from the attempt by the fact that he lives in a city and has few opportunities to seek the country-side. During certain times of the year our cities' parks are rich in bird life and afford full opportunity for study.

My own city observations of birds have been confined largely to Chicago. No place could seem less likely to be attractive to the dainty warbler or the tuneful white throat than this city with its shroud of smoke and its ceaseless clatter. Yet it is doubtful if many other places in the land, of like limited area, hold as much bird life in the spring months as do the parks of this sooty city.

Many journeys in fields far from civilization, and holding a dense feathered population, have never succeeded in making me forget the delights and surprises of my first bird-hunting trip in Lincoln Park, Chicago. Although hunting, my only weapon was an opera-glass. I was but a recently added attendant to the bird train, and I was skeptical of songster possibilities in a park skirted with cable-car lines and thronged seven days a week with pleasure-seekers. My companion had hunted these fields aforetime, and said that we surely should see something, though I thought the outlook was as cold as the day, for this bird-seeking trip was made early in March before winter had shown the least disposition to let go his grip.

As a boy I had gathered some bird-lore in a sort of haphazard way, and when on that March morning we neared the edge of the south pond and heard a rattling cry, I exclaimed, "Kingfisher!" as quickly as did my companion. We reached the shore just in time to see a belted kingfisher, the halcyon of the ancients, light on a dead limb of a tree on Willow Island. The pond was ice-bound throughout, and the fish beneath the glittering surface were safe from attack. The wonder was how the kingfisher in this uncongenial clime could escape starvation. The cold March sunlight showed his fine feathers in all their beauty. He had sunk his head well down between his shoulders. It seemed to me that he must be cold, and that he was wishing mightily he could pull his feathered topknot down over his ears like a hood. Once halcyon darted from his perching-place and poised in the air over the ice, as it is his custom to do when about to strike his prey. For a moment I actually feared that the bird was deceived by a bit of transparent ice through which

he could see a fish and was about to dash himself against the hard surface and end his fishing days forever. He was wiser than we knew, however, and after poising for a while, as though it were only to exercise his wings, he flew back to his dead-limb perch.

Just then we heard the note of a shrike. The bird was on his watch-tower at the tiptop of an elm. He seemed to be taking something of an interest in the kingfisher. It was the great northern shrike, or butcher-bird, and it is barely possible—his summer range being in the far North—that never before had he met one of the tribe to which belonged the belted knight below. Finally the shrike flew to the willow and took a place just above the kingfisher's head. The shrike is a bird of prey, but he never strikes quarry of the fisher's size. Halcyon finally became a little restive under the gaze of his visitor, who had cocked his head on one side and was staring with all his might. The shrike dropped to a lower limb. He was within a foot of the kingfisher's head. This was too much of an impertinence, and the bigger bird left his perch, but as he did so he sprang that watchman's rattle of his full in the face of the shrike. That weird cry of the waterside is enough to unsettle even stronger nerves than those of a butcher, and the frightened shrike turned tail and fled. The kingfisher, who probably had noted the effect of his voice, made for the northern end of the pond, twisting and retwisting his rattle in a sort of glee as he scurried along.

Into Lincoln Park on that March morning had come the first song sparrow of the year. There is never a daylight hour in all the seasons when this little fellow, conscious of the melody within him, does not seem willing to give it voice. The song sparrow is no silk-and-satin singer. He comes into

the scene in plain homespun, but the listener loses all thought of the garb in the sweetness of the strain.

The sparrow's song was marred by a harsh note that came from the branches of the only pine tree that then stood on the little peninsula which runs from the north into the park pond. It was the voice of the bronzed grackle. This bird, better known as the crow blackbird, is sable enough in color on a dark day, but when the sun strikes him his garb is of beaten gold and Tyrian purple. We found the grackle, and found him all alone. That day was the first time of meeting with this blackbird individual whose acquaintance I enjoyed I firmly believe for five successive years. Crow blackbirds are fond of company and it is seldom that you find one separated from its fellows. This Lincoln Park bird, a male in fine plumage, stayed about the pond and the animal house for ten days before any of his kindred from the south joined him. He found the tame ducks' quarters a splendid foraging-place, and there he picked up every day much more than his share of corn. Finally, when the bird was joined by his comrades, I of course was unable to tell him from his mates, but the next year more than a week before any other grackles were to be seen, a single male appeared at the park and at once sought out the ducks' corn-pit. The same thing happened the three succeeding springs, and there never has been a doubt in my mind that it was the same bird whom remembrance of the fat feeding-grounds had tempted to a northern flight long before others of his kind.

An inquiry of one of the officials on the day of my first Chicago acquaintance with the grackle brought the information that the blackbirds were not in the habit of visiting the park. If this were true, that year marked the first appearance

of the grackles in Lincoln Park, but I have long since ceased to place any confidence in the powers of observation of the ordinary park guardian. One morning when I had seen and identified within the limits of the pleasure-ground thirty-eight varieties of native wild birds, I was informed by a policeman, who said he had seen five years of service in the same place, that in all that time there had been nothing wearing feathers in evidence except English sparrows.

Before that first March day trip was ended we saw within the Lincoln Park limits a few robins and bluebirds, and great numbers of juncos and fox sparrows. The white-breasted nuthatches performed their gymnastic feats on every third tree trunk. One of the lessons for beginners in bird-study to learn from this bleak outing—and there was one beginner who learned it well—is, that no matter how forbidding weather conditions may be, there are always surprises in store for him who seeks the birds in their haunts.

The presence of ponds in all the larger parks of our cities makes these breathing places of the people especially attractive to the birds. To the ponds the city dweller owes it largely that the variety as well as the number of the feathered visitors is so great. During the fullness of the tide of migration the bird visitors are not limited to the smaller land species. In the early morning hours the wild ducks are to be found upon the waters, plovers and sand-pipers run along the shores, herons perch upon tree branches in secluded places, and bitterns rest in the sedge grasses. In Lincoln Park on the same day I saw the ruby-throated humming bird and the great bald eagle. The eagle was not one of the forlornly feathered and unhappy looking prisoners in the big gilded cage, but a great soaring bird whose birthright was freedom.

Between these size extremes of the feathered kingdom there can be found few birds that do not on some April or September day find their way into Lincoln Park.

In this day when the bullying English sparrow is abroad in the land, it hardly seems possible that it can be the same native bird individuals that drop into the parks year by year. If the same birds do come back, they must have either short memories or spirits forgiving enough to rank them with the saints. The sparrows never cease their persecutions. At times tragedies result, and at other times the sparrows' encounters with his American cousins take on the semblance of broad comedy. One spring morning, just at sunrise, I saw a bittern drop into the damp grasses along the edge of the south Lincoln Park pond. The sparrows discovered the big bog-trotter as soon as I did. They weighed down the willow branches just above his head, and were all talking at once and at the tops of their voices. They asked the bittern what he was doing there, what right he had on sacred sparrow soil, where he got his long legs, and why he needed a bill the size of a plumber's. They questioned him and jeered at him for five minutes, but he answered not a word. Finally the stake-driver, as the bittern is called in swamp society, became tired of the noise and flew to the little willow-planted island in the middle of the pond. A small bird rarely attacks a larger one when the object of attack is at rest. On the ground or in a tree the assaulted one can readily use its weapons of offense and defense. On the wing, however, it is a different matter. No sooner had the bittern left the ground in lumbering flight than the sparrows descended upon him in a cloud, each one pecking the hapless visitor in passing. Some of the assailants fairly rode on his back using both beak and claw to his tor-

ment and confusion. When the bittern reached a resting-place at the island's edge, he was in a state of mind. In the broad stretches of his native swamp the English sparrow was an unknown quantity. There were swamp sparrows there to be sure, but they were an American product, musical, harmless, and good fellows withal; surely these ill-mannered creatures could be no kin of theirs.

Once lighted, the bittern turned from the water and faced inland. He was looking squarely into the eyes of a score of his sparrow persecutors. He took one comically awkward step forward and made a drive with his powerful beak at one of his tormentors. The blow fell far short of the mark, but had the beak been a foot longer, the alert sparrow would have been out of range before that sharp battering ram could strike home. The bittern was attended by a train of sparrows all the day long. He tried every part of the south pond's banks. He was allowed neither to eat nor to rest. I saw the sparrow horde still harrying the bird as I passed the place at sunset. The next day the visitor had disappeared, and I hope that his night's flight landed him safely among the marsh wrens and the red-winged blackbirds of the swamp stretches which he calls his home.

Lincoln Park, Chicago, has become known as the highway of the warblers. From the time that the first myrtle bird appears in April until the last "Cape May" has passed north in the month whose name it bears, the park is a rich field for the study of this most interesting family. The warbler, whether you find it in Lincoln Park or along the spring flood-burdened banks of the Illinois River, has a beauty and a character all its own. There are bird-students who seek other fields of study for other birds, but in the full tide of the

warbler migration they turn their steps to the city's parks. It is not at all unusual in a good warbler year to find every park tree that offers a food supply of insects bearing a burden of these little creatures, in gold, brown, red, yellow, black, blue, and scarlet. Some of them, with seemingly barely feather surface enough to show one color, are attired in almost every hue known to the eye of man.

The yellow warblers nest by scores within the limits of the parks of all Northern cities. I found the nest of this bird once fastened to the slender stem of a rose-bush in the rose-garden at Jackson Park, Chicago. It was not more than three feet from the ground, and at the edge of a walk upon which passed the thousands of visitors who went daily to enjoy the bloom of the flowers. The little home was flanked on either side by a great blossom, while another opened its petals just above. Within the space of a few cubic inches there was as much of beauty as it is the province of this world to hold anywhere within like restricted limits. The people poked inquisitively into the warblers' housekeeping, but the birds paid little heed, though their hearts probably fluttered with an unutterable fear. The mother bird fed the little ones while trespassing human beings lifted the red rose roof to look into the nest. Though disaster was feared, the devoted parents finally successfully led the young forth for their first flight in life.

The bluebirds, the scarlet tanagers, the cerulean warblers, the Baltimore orioles, the robins, nearly the whole tribe of native sparrows, the woodpeckers, and not infrequently the hawks and the owls, find rest and food within sound of the clanging bells of surface cars and of the rumble of the wheels of elevated roads. I once flushed a woodcock at the base of



CERULEAN WARBLER.



the Lincoln Park statue of the Indian pony and rider, and for three weeks of one spring month a wild wood duck rested on the waters of a pond in the park and showed its brilliant plumage to thousands of visitors.

It is to Lincoln Park that I owe the first chance since boyhood of seeing a living passenger pigeon. There are men of middle age to-day who remember when the flocks of wild pigeons darkened the sun, and when every gun in the land brought down its share, and more than its share, of the creatures that flew low and blindly to their destruction. There were so many millions of the birds forty years ago that no one dreamed that the day would come within a generation when a single pigeon sitting on a tree in a city park might be thought to be the last of its race. No satisfactory explanation has ever been given for the disappearance of the passenger pigeon. To-day it is well-nigh as rare as the great auk, and the reported occurrence of one of the birds in any part of the country is a matter of scientific interest.

The pigeon that I met on that April morning in the year 1894, in Lincoln Park, was perched on the limb of a soft maple and was facing the rising sun. It was a male bird in perfect plumage. There were no trees between him and the lake to break the sun's rays from his breast. Every feather shone, and the bird's neck was gem-like in its brilliancy. Tennyson needed no special poetic license to write of the "Burnished dove." I watched the pigeon through a glass for fully ten minutes. A park loiterer approached and said he wished that he had a gun; that it was the first wild pigeon he had seen in thirty years. That man had no soul above pigeon pie.

A city park is not the safest resting-place for a creature

upon whom may depend the saving of a race from extinction. I flushed the pigeon, hoping that it would direct its flight northward, and not rest until it had passed beyond the limits of boys with slingshots and stones. It left its perch, but to my dismay it shaped its course straight toward the heart of the smoky city. Good wishes followed its arrowy flight, but my fear is that the bird's life history is closed with this recital.

CHAPTER II

THE SONGSTERS OF THE SKOKIE

North of the city of Chicago, and a mile inland from the shore of Lake Michigan, lie the stretches of the Skokie swamp. This unreclaimed marshland is of great extent, and in places it has a heavy fringe of scrub-oak, thick brush, and tangled brier. The bluffs of the lake shore rise vertically to the height of one hundred feet. A table-land extends for some distance westward, and then slopes gently down to the edge of the sluggish stream which stretches its length along through the heart of the swamp. Still farther west the land is low and well cultivated. Standing upon the table-land at the east one looks far off to a heavy line of timber which skirts the Desplaines River and marks the limit of vision. By a sort of an optical illusion the woods of the Desplaines and the adjacent land seem to stand much higher than the country which intervenes. The whole effect of the view is that of a valley, and I know of no other place in Illinois where such an adequate idea may be formed of the character of the landscapes which have made some of the Eastern valleys famous.

There is a wealth of bird life in the region of the Skokie. The diversified nature of the country makes possible the finding of many varieties of the feathered kind. I have tramped the Skokie at all seasons and always with profit. The roads that lead from the lake westward through swamp and meadow are in the springtime musical with the singing of birds. One particular road I have in mind because of the

many friends that I have made along its pleasant way. It is rarely used, and at its beginning in the town of Highland Park it is but little more than a tree-shadowed lane. The orioles build in the swaying elm-boughs that droop above the fences, and many robins place their mud houses in the maples along the beginning of the way.

A tragedy is perhaps not an auspicious thing with which to begin a day's outing. The bird-student, however, must harden himself to endure the sight of the tragic, or else it were better to put the field-glass in its case and forego the study. There is perhaps something of the savage still left in us, and I am free to confess that tragedies are not altogether uninteresting things. I am likewise free to confess that I have a sort of a "sneaking admiration" for the hawk family. They are freebooters and murderers, but there is something in the lives of these birds that is typical of the wildness of the woods and the freedom of the fields. There is a charm about their very boldness, and that landscape lacks something which does not have occasionally the living interest which is added by a hawk beating the covers to startle its cowering quarry into flight.

One May morning, before the sun was showing above the bluff, I started westward along this favorite Skokie road. Just beyond the elms and the maples at the road's beginning lie some open cultivated fields with a barn and outbuildings at their western border. One of the great barns was the home of scores of domestic pigeons, which fed the greater part of the day in the fields. I afterward learned that the birds played havoc with the newly planted seeds. A detached flock of the pigeons was foraging in the first field not more than twenty yards from the fence. I stood leaning on the

topmost rail and watched the birds for a few minutes. They paid no attention to me, but suddenly with a whirl they rose and went in headlong flight toward the barn. A shadow swept by me. I looked up, and not thirty feet above a hawk was flying by like an arrow. I was to witness a bit of falconry. The pursuer gained on the pigeons, and just before they had reached the farm-house the hawk struck the last scurrying bird and bore it to earth. There is generally a shot-gun at hand for use when a hawk dares to approach a farm-house. I fully expected to hear a report, and to have the privilege, if it may be counted one, of looking at a dead bird of prey, but no report came. I afterward found out that no one but myself saw the tragedy, and that had the act been seen it is doubtful if there would have been any shot-gun interference. A farm-hand said that the pigeons had pulled up all the peas and had eaten much more than their share of the planted corn, and that a few pigeons less would be no loss. A few days later the farmer took a hand at pigeon killing himself, and saved his crops by sacrificing his birds. I never knew what species of hawk it was that had a pigeon breakfast so early that morning. It was one of the smaller kinds, and with that knowledge I was forced to be content.

In the Skokie marsh there are two distinct sloughs. Locally this word is pronounced "slews." In the middle of each there is a thread of open water, which in the early spring is a stream of some magnitude. The sloughs are the homes of many red-winged blackbirds. In the last two or three years, however, the blackbirds have decreased greatly in numbers, though I am at a loss to find a reason. The lush grasses and the flags offer as secure a retreat as before, and civilization has as yet encroached but little upon the red-

wing's retreat. This blackbird occasionally gives his friends a surprise. I found his nest one spring day in a damp spot within forty feet of a house in the town of Lake Forest. The Skokie, where his brothers dwelt, was a mile away. A much-traveled street passed within twenty feet of his home, and children played daily under the trees almost within touch of the nest.

A redwing took to a treetop as I crossed the bridge over the first slough on that morning's trip. I was still thinking of the hawk and pigeon, and was paying but little heed to the swamp resident, notwithstanding the fact that he was saying, "Look-at-me, look-at-me, look-at-me," as he swung to and fro on his slender perch. He soon forced my attention, however, by taking off in full flight after a crow. The redwing literally rode on the crow's back. I have seen the kingbird perform this feat, but did not know that the redwing had the spirit for such deeds. It is a mooted question whether or not the life of the crow has in it more evil than good. I was once a stanch champion of the crow's cause, but I have been wavering of late in my allegiance. To my mind the most convincing evidence against him is the unanimity with which all the smaller birds hate him. He must be a nest robber, or else why the consternation whenever *Corvus* appears in a nesting neighborhood?

I left the blackbird behind before he had given his parting peck to the crow. There is a high, dry bit of meadow-land just beyond the swamp, and there I found Dickcissel. Dick has a yellow shirt-front and wears a black button in its center. Some one, I have forgotten who, found much of dignity in Dick, and claimed that unquestionably his right name was Richard Cecil. Richard, however, does not take kindly to

the name, and from mullen-stalk, or tree, all day long in the May month he proclaims his proper name in a strident tone, "Dickcissel, Dickcissel, Dickcissel." The books call Dick the black-throated bunting. Formerly the bird was common on the Atlantic coast; now it is rarely found east of the Alleghany Mountains. As far as my own observations go, I cannot say that I have found it an abundant bird in the Middle West. Dick is essentially a bird of the fields, and yet he surprised me one day by appearing in a tree in a Chicago street, and there giving voice to his name as insistently as though his native meadow stretches lay below.

Two dilapidated barns stand near an old orchard across the road from Dickcissel's field. Many years ago the apple-trees shaded a small house, but that is gone, and a season or two more at the most will see the last of the barns. Then what will become of the swallows who have made the old gray buildings their summer abiding-place for years? Trespassers must be few in the old tumble-down structures, for the barn swallows place their nests upon the rafters within easy reach of the ground, and seem utterly fearless of danger. Ordinarily, the barn swallows put their mud and feathered homes far up under the ridge-pole, but in these old barns, where they have dwelt so many years in peace, the birds rear their young not more than six feet above Mother Earth. On the occasion of my first visit to this barn swallow resort, I was accompanied by a big Newfoundland dog. I had seen the swallows pass in and out the open doorway, and I jumped the fence to get a glimpse of their housekeeping. The dog, Jack, jumped with me. No sooner had Jack landed on the other side than the swallows swooped down on him. They grazed his head in passing, and I was ready to declare that they tweaked his

ears. To me they paid no attention, but directed their wrath at the poor four-footed creature, who could not have injured them or their young had he tried. Jack did not like the treatment he received. It seemed to cow him. Here was an enemy with which he could not combat on anything like equal terms. Finally he put his tail between his legs, jumped the fence again, and slunk down the road, the swallows darting down on him again and again during his retreat. They finally left him, and Jack took to his haunches some fifty yards away and awaited my return. I made several journeys with Jack along that same country road before the season waned, but never again could I get him close to the scene of the swallows' attack.

It was in a meadow near the weather-beaten barns that a bird-loving friend of mine found an almost pure white bobolink, happily mated and as full of joyous song as though Nature had not mixed her colors in painting him. Robert was white, barring a few black streaks on his breast. I made his acquaintance a little later in the season, and found that he and his wife had a field all to themselves. Across the road there were scores of bobolinks, but it was evident that they had made an outcast of their brother because of his peculiar plumage. It has been said that albino birds are not able to secure mates. If that be the rule, this bobolink's case was an exception, for he had a wife who seemed to find nothing wrong with the attire of her lord. I have often wished that I could have seen the albino at the period when the bobolinks doff their summer garb and don the sober clothing of the fall. I wondered if after the molting Bob's new crop of feathers might not have been normal. The speculation ran still further, and I wondered if the coming of the next spring's

season might not find him in the regulation suit of yellow, white, and black.

There is an old stumpy pasture at the end of the Skokie road. With the friend who had found the albino bobolink I was passing this pasture one day, when a sparrow alarm-note quickly and sharply uttered attracted our attention. My companion discovered the source of the alarm in a moment. A little gray bird was perched on the top of a stump, and uttering the most dismal cries that I think I ever heard come from a bird throat. Soon another bird joined it, and for every cry that the first one uttered, the other went it one better, or as I thought it, one worse. Both birds took flight and came close to us, flying just above our heads and keeping up their lamenting, for their tone was sorrow-stricken if anything. When our surprise at the birds' actions had abated a little, we had sense enough to realize that we were dealing with strangers. The birds were unquestionably sparrows, but of a kind neither of us had met before. As they hovered over our heads, they showed soft gray breasts with a single jet-black spot in the center. The sides of the crown were chestnut, and the tail feathers were tipped with white. While flying, both birds spread their tails like fans and formed a striking picture. Finally they seemed to feel that they had made much ado about nothing, and one of them took to a fence-post close at hand. The other soon dropped to the ground at the foot of a stump within ten feet of us, and there fed two young birds, which apparently had just emerged from the shell. The birds were lark sparrows, and to my mind they are the handsomest of the sparrow tribe.

The day following the discovery of the nest I took some friends to see the nestlings and their pretty parents. The

mother bird was brooding the young when we reached the place. I stood directly over her, one foot on either side of the nest. She did not move, but she looked up at me with an eye bright with fear. I sank to my knees. Mother love held her chained to the nest. I put my hand down, and with my forefinger gently stroked her back. She stood it for some seconds, and then scuttled away, seeking to lead me from her treasures by pretending to be crippled. I felt guilty at bringing so much terror to that little homestead. The bird I think soon gained heart, for as we reached the road we saw her carrying food to the young. Eight days from the afternoon that the young were hatched they were out of the nest. Their growth it struck me was unprecedentedly rapid.

I found the lark sparrows breeding in the same pasture the following year, and it was not until then that I heard the male's full song. On this occasion my companion was a musician, and one acquainted with the whole range of bird notes. She pronounced the song to be superior in quality to that of any other of the sparrow tribe. There was a treat that spring afternoon for eye and ear. There was a blending of color and song which it does not often fall to man's lot to enjoy. In the heart of a small tree, as yet destitute of foliage, sat a flaming scarlet tanager, while forming a frame about him were seven gorgeous goldfinches. Below the tree the lark sparrow sang its sweet solo.

I have found the American bittern along the Skokie stretches during the nesting-season. That the bird rears its young there I have no doubt. The race of the bittern in some places, I fear, is nearly run. The jacksnipe shooters who

plod the marshes in the late spring, shoot down ruthlessly every bittern that rises lazily in front of them. The bird is harmless and adds something of life to the landscape, but it must needs fall victim to that love of killing simply for killing's sake, which seems to dwell in the hearts of many so-called sportsmen.

One spring morning I saw a bittern pitch in the swamp grasses where a bit of the woodland had encroached upon the marsh. I marked the spot where the bird had lighted and walking toward it flushed it from its retreat. It flapped its way lazily over the marsh to a pasture which was dotted with stumps. There was absolutely no cover there for the bird. I went to the place and searched the ground thoroughly through a pair of strong glasses, but never a feather did I see. I knew that I could not have failed to see the bittern had it flown away, for barring the stumps, the place was as open as a lawn. Finally a small stump came into the field of my glass. Stump? No; it was not a stump at all, but the bittern itself posing as a bit of dead wood to deceive the intruder. The bird was not more than fifteen yards away. Its body was perpendicular, its neck and head were drawn well down into the shoulders, and the beak was pointing upward, forming a prolongation of the line of the back. The bird in appearance was the counterpart of every one of a dozen of the smaller stumps within a stone's toss of where I stood. I sat down for the sole purpose of testing the bittern's patience. I watched it steadily for twenty minutes, and during all that time it moved not so much as a muscle. It seemed, moreover, as if it had control of its feathers, for the passing breeze which stirred the swamp grass beyond, failed to ruffle its

plumage. Finally I became half ashamed of keeping the bird under such a strain, and rising, I walked toward it slowly. I was allowed to come within a few feet before it moved. Then, after taking four comically dignified steps, the bittern flew far down the stream which makes its way through the heart of the swamp-land.



DICKCISSEL.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH THE LOST RIVER VALLEY

It matters little whether the wind be roaring or bleating, there comes into the heart of the bird-lover March first a pulsing desire to see the first robin of the springtime. Almanacs and calendars forgotten, the true bird enthusiast can tell the first day of the first spring month by a certain quickened sense of yearning for the feathered friends of a bygone year. Unhappily, however, the first day of spring does not always bring the first songster, and after a suburban trip afield on that day had developed no birds save some storm-blown gulls, I made up my mind to go south and meet the migration midway.

My pilgrimage took me to the valley of the Lost River in southern Indiana. The grass had not yet taken on even a tinge of green, but all the hillsides were glowing with the red bloom of the maple. Some botanist will have to tell why the grass was a laggard while the towering trees were aflush. The native sparrows, the slate-colored snowbirds, and the other gleaners of the ground in this part of Hoosierdom, must look upward for their spring signs, and forget the withered grass blades of a year that is gone.

Southern Indiana, the land of the redbird, and alack, of the red mud! To hear the matchless whistling solo of the one, the bird-lover must take rather more than a surfeit of the other. Mud, mud, red March mud everywhere; but above it all a flood of melody from a thousand throats. I

doubt if there be many places on earth better adapted to bird life and better loved by the birds than this southern Indiana country.

With a companion who was willing to become an enthusiast, I left the hotel on the morning following my arrival, just as the sun was touching the top of a chain of sugar-loaf hills to the east. Although we were nearly three hundred miles south of the shore of Lake Michigan, we were not quite near enough to Dixie to have left behind us the last trace of winter. A light cloak of snow clothed the hilltops, and upon the lawn that stretched away from the hotel steps, white patches showed here and there. At the edge of one of these snowy spots a male robin, with the "brighter crimson" of the springtime on his breast, was pulling a reluctant worm from the sod. He was especially welcome to his discoverers, for he was their first robin of the season. Before we had crossed the bridge which spans the little river, we passed a score of robin brothers and sisters, all industriously and successfully "digging for bait." We startled some of the birds from their feeding-places, and thereat they made straight for the maples, where their breasts added another bit of red to the budding trees. They did not seem to resent our discourtesy, but in the joy coming from full stomachs and a glorious morning, they told us in chorus to "cheer up."

My heart was set on redbirds. I had never been so placed that I could form a close acquaintance with these gold-tongued creatures. I had seen the cardinal grosbeak—that is the redbird's other name—only on rare occasions. One year a pair of the birds visited Graceland cemetery in the city of Chicago. They were accidental visitors, and my companionship with them was limited to the space of thirty min-

utes. I had just enough of it to make me wish for more. There is something in the note of the cardinal grosbeak that satisfies my ear more fully, perhaps, than the song of any other bird. It has about it a wholesomeness and yet a sweetness and cheer that I have found in no other bird voice. I must confess, however, that when I have made this admission to friends who have more music in their souls than ever I may hope to have, they have regarded it as a bit of enthusiasm springing from no very sound judgment. Certain it is, however, that no one can tire of the color and marked individuality of the cardinal grosbeak.

The startled robins had returned to their feeding-ground when from some brush beyond the railroad trestle came a melodious whistle, "Beauty, beauty, beauty." It was the call of Master Redbird. Small blame to him for being vain and for pouring into the ears of his listeners the oft-repeated tale of his beauty. A song sparrow had taken to the topmost rail of a crooked fence, and his ecstatic song was coming from a throat that bade fair to split. When the full, rich notes of the cardinal came over the field and marsh, the sparrow stopped singing, as if he knew that a master's instrument was in tune. From the standpoint of pure melody, however, I am told, and I believe, that the sober-garbed song sparrow need not fear to have his voice put to the test with that of his brilliant cousin. There were a dozen cardinals in the underbrush by the swamp. The singing was constant, but for some reason of their own, the birds sang only one at a time. I thought, perhaps, they felt that a chorus of such sweetness would cloy. The Mesdames Cardinal, of whom there were several, refused to sing at all on that morning, although their notes have a softer sweetness than have those

of their red-robed lords. A man who was at work clearing land back of the cardinals' retreat said that the redbirds were more plentiful than ever. Here was some recompense for days spent in stuffy Chicago justice shops in the effort to secure the punishment of receivers of stolen goods in the shape of trapped and caged cardinals.

On our right was a great field whose soil was pierced with standing stalks of withered corn. One of the cardinals left his undergrowth retreat, and crossing our path lighted on one of the stalks about midway of its height. An ear of corn that the gleaners had overlooked was still clinging to the stem. The cardinal at once began the process of husking and shelling. With his powerful beak he pulled a strip of the husk outward and downward, and then he attacked the disclosed kernels. The sun struck the bird full and fair. His plumage was like fire, and a brilliant picture it made against the contrasting brown of the corn. The cardinal shelled at least a dozen kernels and dropped them one by one to the ground. Then he took to the ground himself and began the work of cracking the provender; at least I think he cracked it. He went through a process that was remarkably like chewing, but even a strong field-glass did not enable me to determine positively whether or not he swallowed the kernels whole. In a few minutes he left his feeding-place and went back to his friends in the underbrush. I went down into the field and examined his breakfast-table, but he had cleared it so thoroughly that not a crumb remained.

It was hard to leave the whistling redbirds behind, but there were other feathered friends and feathered strangers to be looked for, and forsooth, all the cardinals of southern Indiana are not confined to one bit of underbrush. We left

the railroad track for the highroad. Soon we were overtaken by an attenuated-looking native, seated on a load of hickory staves drawn by a pair of fat horses. He politely offered the strangers a "lift," for he was going a "right smart way." His invitation was speedily accepted, for March mud makes tired tramps. The driver confided to his guests who sat on the body of the load that he worked from sunrise to sunset cutting and drawing hickory for the sum of sixty cents a day. On this he fed, clothed, and housed a wife and four children. We felt no need to commiserate this man on his lot, because he said he was contented. What is there more than this? This hewer of wood was a man of sentiment. My heart went out to him.

"Some people think I am queer," he said, "because I stop work when the brown thrush sings, and because I don't let my boys go bird-nesting."

Bless him! It is good to know that the small army of "cranks" has recruits where they are most needed.

From a beech at the left of the road came a sharp "Quank, quank." Quick as a flash our Hoosier stove-splitter said: "That's a nuthatch. Most people hereabouts call it a sapsucker. It ain't."

Here was knowledge based on observation, and not on books. The bird was a white-breasted nuthatch, and the experience of a few days showed that it was known to most of the inhabitants of that Lost River Valley as a sapsucker, a name suggestive of injury to trees, and a name which has brought upon the tribe of Indiana nuthatches much undeserved persecution.

A scream, "Keo-u, keo-u," came sharply across a field which stretched away toward the river. A large hawk was

making for a solitary sycamore which stood in the field's center. He was in ignominious flight with two crows in hot pursuit. The hawk pitched upon a limb and clung there, though one of his pursuers struck him full and fair. The impact swung the hawk about, but he made no attempt to retaliate. Our driver kindly stopped his horses, and we glued our glasses on the big bird. It was a red-shouldered hawk, beyond much doubt, though positive identification at the distance was impossible. The crows took a perch just above his hawkship and dropped down alternately to give him a peck and a wing stroke, which he took with cowardly humility. The red-shouldered hawk will strike and carry off a game-cock, but the spurless crow is his master. Why it is that this bird, so well fitted by Nature for fighting, should allow himself on all occasions to be browbeaten and thrashed is something that is past finding out. The crow is literally the *bête noir* of the hawk tribe. Perhaps the reason may be, as our Indiana friend suggested, "The crow has the devil in him, and every bird and everybody is afraid of the devil."

The road wound round the base of one of the many hills. A bird flushed from the wayside, took to the top of a pole which served as a support for the rails of the crooked fence. "One of the smaller thrushes," was the first thought, but it was too early even in southern Indiana for the hermit or the veery. The bird sang softly. No bell-like thrush notes these. The singer was the fox sparrow, the largest of his tribe, but this vocal effort was not his best. Foxie seemed to feel that even though the sun were bright in the valley, there might be storm conditions yet ahead, and that the time had not yet come for the fullness of song. It has always seemed to me that the fox sparrow of the Middle West is of a

richer color than his Eastern brother. When the sun strikes his back, it is positively red; then, too, there seems to be a deeper shade to the brown spots and stripes upon the breast of our Western bird. The sparrow had been gleaning the roadside in company with a lot of juncos, otherwise and more lengthily known as slate-colored snowbirds. The juncos flitted leisurely along in front of the wagon, flirting their tails and showing the snow-white feathers which are their distinguishing mark. I believe that the juncos are inordinately proud of these white markings. Certain it is that never one of them takes wing without making a great showing of the snowy feathers. There must have been five hundred of the juncos all told, with here and there in the flock some cinnamon-crowned Canadian tree sparrows.

The thoughts of the whole flock were bent on food. Suddenly there came from far over the field a piercing "Killy, killy, killy." The snowbirds and the sparrows were stricken with an awful fear. There was a moment of frightened crouching, and then the flock rose as one bird and dashed into the heavy undergrowth beyond the roadside fence. A shadow passed over the ground, and from above again came the repeated and suggestive scream, "Killy, killy, killy." A sparrow hawk was abroad in search of his breakfast. It is the smallest as it is the most beautiful of all the hawks. It may be that our presence at the foot of the big cottonwood-tree, on which the hawk took its perch, saved the life of one of the trembling juncos. At any rate, the bird made no attempt to strike feathered quarry, but with a farewell scream, flew off to a point above the center of a bare field. There it hovered gracefully for a moment after the manner of the northern shrike. Then it dropped down like

the passage of light upon what was doubtless "a morsel of a mouse."

We met another sparrow hawk within a hundred rods. The bird was abundant, and the people told me that it was a permanent resident in southern Indiana. I was interested in the actions of this second little hawk, because although it was only the first week in March, I believe it was hunting a nesting site. It was screaming as shrilly as did its brother first met, and all the small birds of the neighborhood were under cover. The sparrow hawk makes its home in a hole in a tree. This particular bird flew to a cottonwood that was bare of branches for a long distance from the ground. It disappeared so suddenly after reaching the tree that our curiosity was aroused, and we left the stove-splitter and his wagon and started for the cottonwood. The tree stood alone, and the hawk could not leave it without being seen. We searched with our glasses, but found no trace of the bird. Half-way up the trunk, however, we discovered a hole. My companion picked up a club and pounded on the tree. The sparrow hawk came out of the hole with a rush, and screamed "Killy," as he flew away, and I haven't the least doubt it meant it, for we probably angered him by interfering with its affairs. Several days afterward I saw the hawk go into the same hole, and had the feat been possible, I should have climbed the tree to see if I could not find a nest and eggs, and thus establish the fact that the sparrow-hawk gets him a home at a much earlier date than the scientists put it down in the books.

The chickadee, the cheerful little character in feathers beloved of Emerson and Thoreau, tells the same lisping tale and performs the same dizzy gymnastic feats in the lindens along Lost River that he does in the elms on Concord's

banks. On that March morning, the chickadee showed me a new trait in his character. I never before had known the bird to be in the least pugnacious. Yet here he was having a very decided row with a nuthatch neighbor. The birds were on the same limb, and perhaps their quarrel was over some choice bit of insect food that lay hidden in the bark. Whatever the cause, they went at each other like a pair of game-cocks. A bluejay, which let me say in passing was, strangely enough, the only one I saw in southern Indiana, was looking on at the combat with an expression of pure amazement. The jay, doubtless, had had many a pitched battle of his own, but equally doubtless he had never before looked on a sight like this. Here were two models of deportment descending to the level of the prize-ring. I know that the jay, like the human observer, wanted to cry "shame," but also, like the human observer, was kept from it by the fear of being thought inconsistent. The two feathered morsels fought for fully two minutes, and then the nuthatch turned tail and fled. He took to the trunk of a big tree, and there, head downward, began searching for food as unconcernedly as though he had never forgotten for an instant what was due to his fame as a bird of correct habit. The chickadee remained on the battle-ground, and in a moment he uttered his "phœbe" note, though whether it was intended as a cock's crow of victory or not must remain a secret.

There have been one or two grave discussions as to whether birds are deficient in the sense of smell. I came to the conclusion during my southern Indiana sojourn that some birds must be deficient in both the senses of taste and smell. In Orange County is situated a group of springs famous for their healing qualities, and—dare I say it?—infamous

38 Birds of Lakeside and Prairie

for their taste and smell. I had ample evidence of the curative powers of the waters, but I must say that the fountain-heads make their presence known long before you come within sight of their bubbling water. The gem-like Maryland yellow throat will build its nest in the heart of an ill-smelling skunk-cabbage. This is one of the arguments advanced for the absence of the olfactory nerve in some birds. If those who adduce this yellow-throat habit to substantiate their theory could see, as I have seen, the cardinal, the robin, and the crow blackbird drinking with apparent relish of water that smelled to heaven and beyond, they would consider their point proven beyond the peradventure of a doubt.

CHAPTER IV

IN SOUTHERN HOOSIER HILLS

The Lost River of Indiana is well named. It flows along its noisy course for many miles, and then suddenly disappears into the bowels of the earth. At a point more than a mile from where the stream gets lost it reappears, and thence to its mouth its way is "clear and above ground." The river flows for some distance through a natural bowl. A rain of a few hours' duration causes an overflow of its banks, and the bowl becomes a lake. A heavy thunder-storm occurred during the night following my first day's trip afield in the Lost River country. The morning showed the haunts of the red-birds and juncos well under water. There was not a cloud in the sky, but the little valley through which we had tramped the day before was flooded from hill to hill. The highlands offered the only conditions that seemed likely to prove satisfactory to birds and bird-lovers.

I found a companion for the second day's outing in a young Indianapolis physician who had sought southern Indiana "for the healing of the waters." Apparently he had sought it to good effect. Two weeks before he had been carried into the hotel, too weak to walk, and to-day he was willing to undertake a tramp of ten miles over the hills. Some one told us of a sugar-bush that was to be found in the back country. This information was an added inducement to the doctor who confessed a weakness for maple sap.

Before we struck out for the higher hills we came across a

group of men and boys at the edge of a pond. A mud-hen, which had dropped in during the night for food and rest, was paddling about the water, and acting as a target for the revolvers of half a dozen of the men. The bullets spattered on the surface all about the bird, but it lacked the wisdom to take flight. It swam about in a circle in a half-bewildered way and simply invited death. I asked the men to stop shooting, but I speedily found that humanitarian pleas are of little avail when addressed to a man with a gun. I threw a stone the size of my fist in the direction of the bird, hoping that the splash would frighten it to flight, but the stone had no more effect than the shots. We left the men still popping away, and that evening on our return I heard a big fellow boasting to the group gathered round the open fire in the hotel office that he had killed the bird at the fifteenth shot. Mud-hens are notoriously stupid, and they pay the penalty of their stupidity every time a pot-hunter gets into one of their retreats.

I saw my first bluebird of the year that morning in the Hoosier hills. The bluebirds must have wonderful recruiting powers; it was only seven years before that their ranks were so thinned by the attacks of the cold that it was thought the muster-roll never again would be full. This spring of 1901 was the first time that I had seen anything like a satisfying number of these sweet-voiced birds since they fell victims to that wintry blast which penetrated far into the southland. It is said now that there are more bluebirds than ever, but this saying is doubtless due to faulty memories on the part of the observers. One bluebird that we came across was gravely inspecting the carcass of a crow which some one had hung on the thorns of an Osage orange hedge. The crow had been killed and put

there as a lesson to his marauding brothers, but I couldn't believe that the lesson had sunk very deep into the crow mind, for on a tree less than fifty yards from the body of the deceased, three crows were sitting and sunning themselves unconcernedly.

Before the morning was spent I had found out why it is that heavy windstorms fail to break the eggs in birds' nests that are hung on frail branches which sway and snap with every blast. The roads were in such condition that they were impassable for wagons, and many people passed us on horseback. If memory serves, every one of the horsemen carried a basket of eggs slung over his right arm. The horses floundered through mud-holes, and made their stumbling ways up and down hills where the roadway was covered with stumps and stones washed out from the embankments by the heavy rain. The rider in every instance made the basket with its precious burden conform to the swaying motion of the horse, and never an egg did I see broken. One rider told us that he depended largely on the egg crop for a living and that he couldn't afford to smash any. He further volunteered the information that he thought he could fall down hill with his horse "and never crack a shell."

Our way led us through a little hamlet. At the crossing of two roads there was a tavern with a huge tree standing in front of its door. There were six bronzed grackles holding a "windy congress" in the branches. A redbird occupied a perch at the very top of a small tree which stood at the gate of a cottage next the inn. Four boys were playing about the gate, and though the bird was calling loudly, the youngsters paid no heed. I thought it promised well for the future of the race of redbirds when a songster of such brilliancy could sit

and sing unmolested just above the heads of four boys who were passing through the sling-shot and bird-nesting age. Thinking it barely possible that the boys, intent on play, had not noticed the bird, I purposely called their attention to it and asked them what it was. They were not backward in expressing surprise at my supposed ignorance, and the answer to my question was, "Don't you know a redbird, mister?" Then they told me there were lots of redbirds around, and that they could whistle "bully." It is more than likely that the very commonness of certain birds of brilliant plumage saves them from destruction. It is to the unaccustomed that human attention is most sharply attracted. In the East in many places the red-headed woodpecker has been practically exterminated. He never was as common a bird there as he is to-day with us in the Middle Western country. His rarity and beauty invited destruction, and it came. In the prairie towns and villages the red-headed woodpecker is as common as the robin, and despite his beauty, the small boy passes him by with barely a thought.

The red-headed woodpecker came into my mind while we stood at the gate talking to the little Hoosier lads; and following came a thought that not one of these birds had we seen, though I had understood from a friend who had visited the locality before that the red-headed woodpeckers were abundant. When we had left the little village behind us we accepted standing-room in a grain wagon, offered by a boy who was driving home from the railroad station. I asked him about the red-headed woodpeckers. He said that generally they were the commonest birds that they had, but that the fall before they had all disappeared, and that he had not seen one all through the winter nor thus far in the spring. I



TUFTED TITMOUSE.

asked him how he accounted for their disappearance, and he answered that the birds left because the beechnut crop was a failure. "The red-heads," he said, "like beechnuts better than any other food. They live on them all winter. Last fall, for some reason, there wasn't a beechnut in the country, and the birds all cleared out."

The lad's explanation was undoubtedly the true one. He said that he had studied something about the birds in school, and that there wasn't as much shooting going on now as there used to be. When he discovered that we were bird enthusiasts and were out on an opera-glass hunt, he entered into the spirit of the occasion and gave us much information. He was in a receptive mood as well, and I hope that he gained knowledge enough to pay him for what he imparted.

A high-pitched voice, calling "Peter, Peter, Peter," came from some trees on the hillside. The boy stopped his horses.

"I've seen and heard that bird ever since I was born," he said; "I call him Peter, because that's what he calls himself, but what the bird is I don't know; tell me."

By this time I had the bird in the field of my glass, and I told the boy driver its name, though this was my first glimpse in life of "Peter." The discovery of a bird new to the observer makes a red-letter field-day. "Peter" was the tufted titmouse, first cousin to the chickadee. "Tufty" is common enough in the southern Indiana latitude, and is occasionally seen as far north as Chicago, though it had never been my fortune to meet him. Soon more of the titmice came into sight. There was a troop numbering nearly a score. They are active little creatures, and of a jolly temperament. For a week I had ample opportunity to study "Tufty" and his ways; and with all due regard for our little

friend, the black-cap chickadee, who does his best to save our Northern winters from dreariness, I confess that I think Cousin Peter is of the more interesting habit.

A woodpecker note that was new made me ask our driver to stop once more. An orange-pated bird scuttled around the trunk of a tree. Here was another discovery. It was the red-bellied woodpecker, common enough in this locality, but hitherto a stranger to the visiting observers. This woodpecker has been getting himself much disliked in recent years. It is not at all an uncommon bird in Florida, and there the orange-growers say that it attacks and ruins the fruit. Bird-lovers, the country over, are hoping that it will be proved that the bird selects only the unsound oranges for probing. Since it has been fairly well established that the kingbird, which was supposed to be a great destroyer of honey-bees, eats only the worthless drones, the red-bellied woodpecker's friends hope that a parallel excuse may be found for its conduct.

We drove under a tree whose branches roofed the road. It was filled with red-winged blackbirds. They were all males, and as they shifted uneasily from twig to twig, they showed to advantage their shoulder-knots of scarlet and gold. It was a noisy flock, but in the spring every bird-note has in it something of softness. Our driver host told us that the redwings were abundant in spring and fall, but that they did not nest anywhere in the vicinity. This statement struck me as being curious, for on every side were places which seemed to be ideal for the purposes of blackbird housekeeping. Beyond the blackbird tree we saw our first meadowlark. He was full of the joy of living, and was trying his best to tell the listening world about it from the top of a fence-post. We drove past the bird without causing him to leave his perch.

I have known the meadowlark since boyhood, but never before had been so near the living bird, except on the rare occasions when I had flushed it from its nest with my trespassing footsteps. A little farther on we found a flock of goldfinches. As doubtless every one knows, the male goldfinch changes his resplendent coat of yellow and black for one of dun in the fall of the year. He takes off this habit some time in the spring, and puts on his summer livery once more. Three of the goldfinches we saw on that March morning were in the transition stage. With them, undressing and dressing must be the matter of a month or so. Familiar as my companion and I were with the goldfinch in both his hot and cold weather attire, neither of us had ever before seen him while he was changing his clothes. As a matter of fact, I did not recognize the bird until the little flock took wing and began the familiar weaving flight across the field. I have seen the goldfinch in northern Illinois as late as April 1st still wearing his full winter costume.

As my friend the doctor and I were bound for a sugar-camp, which was supposed to lie at the left of the road we were traveling, the time was approaching when we should have to leave the wagon and take to the fields. In the few minutes which passed before parting with our boy driver he took occasion to tell us that he had liked birds and flowers ever since he could remember. Then he named a number of his favorites. That boy had a keen insight, and knew Nature thoroughly and sympathetically. When we said good by, I casually asked his name.

"Love," he said.

Surely there is something in a name after all.

My companion and I trudged our way over the hills

toward the west. A mile ahead we saw a house with a grove back of it. "There, surely," we thought, "we shall find the sugar-camp." We made the mile, and were told that we had another one to go. We tramped fully two good city miles, and found we were "not there yet." A man in a field was opening a shock of corn, an operation that was being watched with great solicitude by a dozen crows sitting on a fence a hundred yards beyond. We asked him about the sugar-bush, and were told that it wouldn't do us any good to go there, because it had been a poor season for sap and no trees had been tapped. This was a disappointment to the doctor, who had set his mind on sugar. It had its compensations, however, for our steps were turned aside into what proved to be better bird-fields. We started the crows from their roosting-place on the fence, and they flapped away across a stumpy pasture, cawing their disapproval of our intrusion. Far away above and beyond a little patch of woods we saw a moving speck in the sky. The glasses showed us that it was a soaring bird. I put it down at once for a great hawk. In a moment I was ready to admit myself stupid, for my companion, keener eyed than I, said, "Turkey-buzzard."

Buzzards are common enough, as I afterward found, in southern Indiana, and it was curious that we had not seen them before. In a few minutes two more buzzards appeared, and before long the three were circling directly over our heads. From the moment that they had come into view I had not seen a single stroke of the wing. The birds simply rode on the air. There was something majestic in their soaring flight. If the turkey-buzzard were as interesting a creature at close range as he is at a distance, there are few birds whose acquaintance would be better worth cultivating.

After a while I saw one of the buzzards leisurely flap his wings, and then launch out once more upon his sailing flight. As a matter of experiment I singled the bird out with my eye from his fellows, took out my watch, and sat down on a stump. Twenty minutes passed before that buzzard found it necessary to gain new soaring power from another wing-stroke. One of the birds dropped down to a point within thirty yards of us just as we were passing a farm-yard. The yard was full of chickens, and while the ordinary hen is always ready to give a cluck of fear when a bird as harmless as a pigeon passes over, these fowls paid no attention whatever to the big bird whose shadow was thrown over them. The chickens' ancestors doubtless had learned the harmless character of the buzzard, and the knowledge was one of the hereditary properties of these particular barn-yard fowls.

With a courage born of hunger the doctor and I rapped at the door of a farm-house and asked if we might have some dinner. The answer was a hearty, "Yes, and welcome, if you'll wait until we can cook it."

We were not only willing to wait, but were glad of a chance to rest. We took station on the porch, in front of which stood a tree that was full of woodpecker holes. This farm-house was twelve miles from a railroad station, and the nearest neighbor was three-quarters of a mile away, yet here in this isolated spot were the English sparrows in scores. This pest is thought to be city-loving, but here it was perfectly at home miles away from its supposedly favorite haunts. Every woodpecker's hole in the tree had a pair of sparrows in it, and each pair was busy building a nest. When I thought what those holes would mean as home-sites for the bluebirds that we had passed on our way, I was ready to eject the

Britishers without notice. A farm-hand told me that the sparrows had been about the place for three years. He said that the bluebirds disappeared the year that the foreigners arrived.

The recollection of that southern Indiana farm-house dinner is with me yet. We ate in a long, narrow room, which had at one end a huge, old-fashioned fireplace with twelve great cord-wood sticks crackling and blazing away in its ample interior. Although the sun was warm, there was a chill in the air that made the fire grateful. I had not seen the equal of that fireplace blaze since early childhood in the far-away East. Our hostess gave us to eat of everything that a farm produces. It was a dinner bountiful beyond precedent. It was a perfect delight to us when we were asked whether we would have coffee or sassafras tea. Of course we took sassafras tea, and I have nothing ill to say of a beverage which they told us was on their breakfast-table three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, though they confessed, "We generally have coffee for dinner."

We took up the journey hotel-ward, refreshed in mind and body. Time forbade us to turn aside into bird byways, but we had one interesting experience as we jogged on our way. When we had turned into the main road that led straight to our hotel we saw a large hawk sitting on a telegraph-pole. The bird allowed us to approach as near as the next pole to him before he showed any symptom of uneasiness. There we stopped and ogled him with our glasses. It was a red-tail, and the biggest one I had ever seen. Beyond a field to the left a little white house stood on a side-hill. It was about two hundred yards away. A rail fence separated the yard of the house from a roadway where a flock of Brahma chickens



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.

was feeding. Suddenly the hawk launched out and swept across the field toward the fowls. The big rooster saw the bird coming, and uttering an alarm cry, he made for the yard as fast as his long legs could carry him. The hens followed, and helter-skelter they went up the hill toward the house. The last Brahma had succeeded in getting through a hole in the latticework below the piazza just as the hawk brought up on the flooring a few feet above. He sat there at the doorstep perfectly fearless for fully a minute, and then leisurely made for the top of a tree only a few yards distant. The last look that we had of the bird through our glasses showed him still hungrily watching the hole.

CHAPTER V

IN WINTER FIELDS

A crow was calling from the Skokie, while from the oak at the doorstep a bluejay, in a voice more grating than usual, answered the salutation with the epithet "thief," twice repeated. It may seem strange that the summons of two harsh bird-voices should be potent enough to draw one to the outdoor world from the front of a pile of genially crackling birch-logs, when the thermometer is dangerously near zero. There are some people, however, to whom a jay and his jargon, and the call of a bird as common as a crow, are preferred to the warmth of a hearth, though the fire be of birch. The same persons who tell you that since the English sparrow was imported every other winged thing except the mosquito and the house-fly has disappeared, will tell you also, even if they admit the presence of a few songsters in summer, that there are no more birds in winter than there are in last year's nests. There are winter birds, however, and interesting winter birds' at that. Those who will take the trouble and who will learn how to look, will find them lurking in the shrubbery just beyond the snow which banks the doorstep, or it may be, calling with voices as blithe as of the summer from the bare apple-boughs of the orchard.

When the crow called me that cold January morning, I struck out for a tramp through the Skokie swamp, and all the country that lay between it and the hill on the east. It was a bitter morning, and even the owl, hidden in the hole

in the oak, "for all his feathers was a-cold." I halted at the foot of the dooryard steps, and cast an anxious look upward to see if the jay which I had heard from the fireside had deserted. I am superstitious enough to think that it augurs well for the success of a bird-hunting trip to see some feathered character at the start. This bit of superstition is, I believe, common to all bird-students. The jay was still there. It is perhaps the commonest bird of this locality, both in winter and summer. You can always count upon the jay's doing something new. This doorstep jay did something decidedly new—he dropped from his beak to the ground at my feet a round, flat, smooth stone of the diameter of an inch. It was one of the kind of which thousands may be found along the lake shore. I should judge, from a long and somewhat intimate acquaintance with jays, that they have not the regular habit of making stone-boats of their beaks. I picked the stone up, and asked the bird what he had intended to do with it. He cocked his head on one side, looked down on me, and screamed "Thief" at the top of his lungs. I agree with Bradford Torrey that this bird says "thief" much more plainly than he says "jay." Thus he characterizes himself as well as if he spoke English more fluently. The jay is essentially a thief, and seems to take delight in proclaiming the fact to the world.

On the outskirts of Highland Park there is a patch of dense undergrowth. Before the heavier timber was cut down, the place was known as Hamilton's Woods. Some years ago these acres of underbrush were divided into town lots, and a new city was to spring up. One house and an ambitious cement sidewalk with plank extensions are all that remain as monuments to the purpose and hope of the pro-

jectors. This town-site is on the very summit of the ridge which slopes down westward to the Skokie. Far off beyond the stretches of coarse swamp-grass one sees, blue in the distance, the woods that skirt the river. From this spot it is that sunsets may be seen having in them something of the higher glories of color that are associated with the close of day in the hill countries far removed from the level plains of Illinois. The undergrowth is not uninhabited. There, summer and winter, live the rabbits, a squirrel or two, the red-headed and downy woodpeckers, the jay and the chickadee, and the not infrequent quail. In summer this spot is the haunt of the scarlet tanager, the catbird, the brown thrasher, and the oriole.

When I reached Hamilton's Woods on that winter's day, I stopped to examine some bits of bird architecture; for though man failed to build here, there are enough bird homes in the patch to give evidence of its excellence as a dwelling place. In a hazel-bush, not more than twenty feet from the highroad, I found the deserted nest of a catbird. The July previous I had watched the outgoing of the fledgeling family from this little home. I had reached a point within five feet of the nest when I was struck by the fact that it was moving. There was a rustling of the dry oak leaves which formed its base, and the twigs above were swaying in a way which precluded the possibility of the movement being the work of the wind. Then through my mind flashed the thought of Dr. Abbott's tales of winter catbirds in New Jersey, and of the story I had heard of one of the birds which for a whole winter did not go nearer the equator than South Chicago. Was it possible that one of these gray, scolding, querulous creatures was revisiting its summer home, and marking the exception

which proved the Spanish proverb, "There are no birds in last year's nests"? I made a cautious step or two, and the mystery was explained. A piercing little black eye, with a world of fright in its narrow compass, was peering at me from above the edge of the nest. Then there was more rustling, and I caught a glimpse of something as it flashed down the stem of the hazel-bush. Then there was disappearance and quiet. It was a mouse, of course. He had taken possession of the catbird's summer home for a winter residence. There was too strong a temptation to resist to pry into the house-keeping of Master Mouse. He had "bulged up" the inner bark lining of the structure a little, and beneath this he placed his store of provender, which consisted of corn and hazelnuts. There was no corn-field within fifty rods, and this diminutive four-footed "beastie" must have made many a weary journey for his corn supply. The hazelnuts were close at hand and in abundance.

It is hard work to get away from a jay. Even though he be at a distance, his voice is a constant reminder that he is on earth. I have said that the jay is essentially a thief—now for proof positive. A pair of these steel-blue coated creatures had been watching my operations on the catbird's nest with apparent interest, though I had given them little attention, because of the greater matter in hand. I had walked away from the thorn-bush to a distance of about fifty yards, when a jay call that had something of jubilation in it, caused me to turn. The two birds were engaged in rifling the mouse's larder. I was conscience-stricken at being the cause of the loss of food, so I drove the birds away. I found that they had secured already a large share of the supply, and I have little doubt that they returned later to complete the robbery.

A little log hut, built after the fashion of fifty years ago, stands at a corner of Hamilton's Woods, upon what was intended for a town lot. The path leads away from the highway at this point and strikes down straight toward the Skokie. A pair of downy woodpeckers flew over the path, and began playing hide-and-seek around the bole of an oak. The downy woodpecker is everlastingly cheerful. Whenever there is a break in the interest of a winter morning's walk, he is certain to appear and do what he can to enliven the occasion. This morning he did more. One of the pair went to the tip of a tree, and while my eye was following his course along the branch there came within the range of vision ten great birds far up in the sky and flying westward. They were wild geese. There was the gander leader, and trailing along forming the V-shaped wedge were the followers. I blessed the downy for calling my attention to the geese. It was the middle of January; the thermometer was close to zero, and yet here was a flock of geese in northern Illinois. The birds were heading for the swamp. What two months before had been a stream in the center of the marsh was now a long, glistening, ice ribbon, with here and there, as it were, a white knot tied, where the rushes parted a little to the right and left. The ten geese settled slowly toward the swamp, and then rose again at the direction of their leader, who doubtless said, "No rest nor forage here, but I know of a corn-field beyond."

I put these ten birds down as geese indeed, for forgetting the warmth and food plenty in the South, and for trusting for a living to the poor pickings of a frozen, storm-swept country. In a few moments I found there were other geese. A second V-shaped flock of thirteen individuals passed over in the wake of the leading ten. Apparently there was some trouble in the

second group, for the birds kept changing sides; the two immediately behind the leader moved one in the place of the other, and then the maneuver was repeated at the middle of the gathering, and then at the extreme rear. This continued for some time, and there came into my mind the irresistible conclusion that the old gray gander leader was telling his followers that five birds on one side and seven on the other of the V was an uncouth flying order, and that in trying to get one bird to change over, his orders were so misunderstood that a general mix-up resulted. Finally, however, before the flock was lost to sight, the old fellow succeeded in getting things straightened out.

A man in a brickyard near the swamp said that the geese were coming from the lake because a storm was brewing. There was no storm for a week, however. The same man said that he had seen a thousand geese "a few days before." Pinned down, however, he admitted that the "few days before" was in November.

The bluffs against which the waves of Lake Michigan beat just north of Chicago are cut by deep ravines. In the summer these ravines are thickly tenanted by birds. All through June they ring with the notes of the rose-breasted grosbeak, the wood thrush and the brown thrasher. I determined one winter morning, in the same month as that of my Skokie trip, though in another year, to find out what one of these great gullies held in winter that was of interest to a bird-lover. The weather conditions of the night before and of the early morning were unusual for midwinter. At midnight the air was warm and heavy; at five o'clock in the morning there was a thunder-storm raging which would not have been out of place in late April. The thermometer marked seventy degrees, and

the lightning played through a heavy downfall of rain. At seven o'clock there were signs of clearing. The sun peeped out through a break in a cloud bank that hung low over Michigan. An hour later as I stood on the lake shore ready to begin the threading of the ravine, there was no longer any rain and the air was beginning to take on a crispness.

The first glimpse of bird-life came just before I turned inland. The advance guard of what became a great army of gulls crossed the horizon. They were herring gulls, and in color were in keeping with the gray day. A flock of ducks flew rapidly along below the gulls and parallel to the shore line. They were moving like thought and soon left the gulls far behind. I recognized them as old squaws, wanderers from the far off Arctic. In the middle of winter the old squaw is not an uncommon bird at the southern end of Lake Michigan. When the lake is well filled with ice these northern ducks search for the stretches of open water, and there they seek rest and food. A gunner who took station at the end of the government pier in Chicago one winter's day, killed a hundred old squaws in a few hours' time. When the killing was complete, he found out that the birds were unfit for food, and the bodies of the beautiful creatures were thrown away. I left the lake and went into the ravine. On the bank of the little brook at the bottom the air was warm and still. The stream was ice-bound only in places. The locality was like one of the constant succession of scenes that are found in a ramble in New England. Sadly enough, however, June sees this ravine brook dried up, and the July sun withers the flowers at its edge and the foliage on its banks. The ravine's beauty largely will pass, while in New England the mountain-fed streams will keep the summer blossoms bright and the leaves green.



GOLDFINCH



I startled a junco from his feeding place on the brook's bank. He was all alone. I think that was the only time in my field experiences that I have found a junco separated from his fellows. While the books put this little snowbird down as a common winter resident in this latitude, I have found it in the heart of winter only on three occasions, and then in limited numbers. A few yards beyond the junco's foraging place I found the empty tenement of a red-eyed vireo. The vireo had used a piece of newspaper as a part of his building material. The print was still clear, and I found the date-line of a dispatch at the heading of a short article. The date was July 3, of the year before. This was proof beyond question that the vireo had begun housekeeping rather later in the season than is usual with his tribe. Judging from other empty nests that I found close at hand the vireo had pleasant neighbors, the redstarts and the yellow warblers. The birds must have found this ravine an ideal summer resort, plenty of shade, good water, lake breezes, and a larder well supplied with all the insect delicacies of the season.

The pathway of the stream was lined in places with snow which the thaw had spared. I found that I was not the first traveler of the morning. A rabbit had preceded me, and apparently he had gone a long way from home, for the marks of his footsteps led on until the ravine was at an end. A jay resented my intrusion into the ravine. The jay finds his perfect setting in a winter day. His coloring makes the bird seem like a bit broken from the blue sky and from the edge of a cold gray cloud. When I finally reached the plain above the ravine, I found that a blizzard was raging. In the sheltered depths I had not known of the change in the weather. Within an hour the worst storm of the year was sweeping

over the lake. It was on that day, which had opened with a spring-like mildness, that the steamship *Chicora*, plying Lake Michigan, went down to destruction. The air was filled with particles of snow that cut like sleet. I reached a field finally where the storm had full sweep, and was compelled to brace myself to resist its force. I edged into it as best I could, and before I had made many yards I found that even in the tempest I had bird companions. A flock of snow buntings were whirling over a depression in the prairie. The wind tossed them about almost at will, but in some way they managed to hold their place over the same low spot in the field. They went to the ground finally, but as I passed them they rose in a body and went hurtling down the wind. What I saw was but little more than some streaks in the snow-laden air. A blizzard is of but little more moment to a snow bunting than a zephyr. How the wind did hurl them! They were not more than four feet above the ground, and were being borne straight at a close board fence. I thought they were about to be dashed headlong against it, but the buntings had ridden on the breast of a storm before. When within a few feet of the fence they rose and went scuttling over the top, showing white against the treetops beyond.

I was forced by the storm to follow in the wake of the snow buntings. I had been wondering all the morning at the absence of the chickadee. I found him and a dozen of his brothers working their way through the branches of a grove of oaks near the little railroad station of Ravinia. Wind and weather are nothing to the chickadees. They must feel something like a contempt for their relatives who must needs go south at the first pinch of Jack Frost's fingers. The chicka-

dees find shelter and plenty of food in our winter woods. They eat and lisp their little note until a touch of warmth comes out of the south, and then, though their main occupation still will be eating, they will utter a fuller note and become modest members of the great spring choir.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE TRAIL OF POKAGON

Pokagon, hereditary chief of the Pottawattomies, until his death three years ago lived in a hut which stood among the fire-blasted remains of what was once a great Michigan pine forest. Pokagon was writing a book. He toiled early and late at the narrative which he said would give for the first time the Indian's side of the story of the Chicago massacre. The chief rejected the word "massacre," and called the affair which took place under the old cottonwood tree on the lake shore, a fight—a square, manly, open fight.

One early February day in the year 1897 a Chicago newspaper commissioned me to seek out the old Pottawattomie in his forest retreat, and to get from him an outline of the story which he was writing. I have never been quite able to decide which I found the more interesting, the two hours' talk with the aged Pottawattomie at his fireside in the wilderness, or the drive to his home over snow-covered fields and through the winter woods. Almost every mile of that ride had in it some bird surprise. The thermometer marked zero, and the distance from Hartford, Michigan, to Pokagon's home, twenty-four miles, was made in an open sleigh. The air was perfectly still, however, and with plenty of wraps the cold did not strike deep. Had I known it I could have shortened the journey to four miles by leaving the cars at another station, but I did not make this discovery until the train which had brought me to Hartford was whisking away around a hill in the distance.

I have never been sorry that I left the warm Pullman for the cold of the open fields.

The proprietor of a Hartford livery stable agreed to drive me to Pokagon's dwelling and back again in time to take the late night train to Chicago. It was a matter of forty-eight miles out and back, and with zero conditions and the snow over the fences all the way, we flattered ourselves that we were showing some little fortitude in undertaking the trip. When we had reached the edge of the village we met a party of Indians occupying a box sleigh. One of them was Pokagon's son upon whom now rests his father's mantle. We stopped and talked to the Indians for a few minutes, and while we were getting some hints for the shortening of our journey two woodpeckers flew over our heads and flattened themselves against the bole of a big beech tree at the side of the road. I never had seen the species before, but I knew what it was. I wondered if the Indians were true enough to the traditions of their knowledge of wild life in all its forms to give me the name of these stranger birds. I called the chief's son's attention to them and asked him what they were. The two visitors were showing just the tops of their heads around the tree trunk. The Indian looked at them and said simply, "Winter woodpeckers." I asked him whether he never saw them in summer and he answered, "No." Then he went on to tell me that there were some woodpeckers that were "both summer and winter woodpeckers." As members of this class he described accurately the downy woodpecker, and its larger brother, the hairy. The red-head, he said, was also sometimes a winter woodpecker. The bird on the tree, he informed me, did not come every winter, or if it did come, he did not always see it. The Indian

had no definite name for the bird but he knew its habits thoroughly. The books contain nothing better nor truer than this Pottawattomie's descendant's account of the "winter and summer woodpeckers."

The birds which were making a breakfast table of the beech tree were Arctic three-toed woodpeckers, an orange-pated northern visitor which is not uncommon in hard winters along the eastern shore of southern Lake Michigan. Before we parted company with the Indians, a downy woodpecker came to the beech and began chasing the Arctic visitors around the bole. It seemed to be on the part of the downy more of a frolic than a fight, and I did not feel called upon to interfere. The downy woodpecker, while he is the smallest of his tribe, is far from being the least in interest. I know no more cheerful and companionable bird than this little black and white fellow with the red feather in his cap. Cold cannot chill his optimism nor heat abate one jot of his industry.

Our course toward Pokagon's home took us northwest. The roads in many places were unbroken, but our strong, willing horses took us through the drifts with scarce an effort. At times we left the road altogether and drove across lots and through the open woods. At the edge of a small timber patch we passed a spring with a thread of a stream running away from its boiling pot. It was the first spring that I had seen for years for they are practically unknown in the prairie country. The little stream was tumbling over a bed of pebbles and Jack Frost had been unable to fetter it. Some lispig notes fell from a maple whose boughs overhung the water. In the tree I found four golden-crowned kinglets. The kinglet is a winter bird in northern Illinois, I am told,

but with all my searching I had never been able to find one after Thanksgiving Day. The bird is the smallest of the feathered kingdom barring only the ruby-throated hummer.

There is an interest that attaches to the kinglet aside from its beauty and its cheerful habit of life. Aristotle knew and named this bird more than three centuries before Christ. The Greek philosopher was probably the first bird student. He certainly was the first whose books have come to us. Aristotle made all sorts of curious mistakes, but we must honor him as a pioneer. He met the little kinglet with its golden crown and named it *Tyrannos*, the tyrant. He so named it from its golden crown of royalty which then as to-day was too often synonymous with tyranny. The bird retains the name in the form of kinglet, as it retains the golden crown until this day. The most interesting study of Aristotle's treatise on birds has been given us by W. Warde Fowler, in his "Summer Studies of Birds and Books." The Michigan kinglets were "t-zeeing, t-zeeing," energetically all the while that they were picking grubs out of the bark. I don't think that I ever ran across a silent golden-crowned kinglet. Their utterance is not loud but it is constant, and as they are always picking up food I am afraid that the otherwise well-mannered little king is open to the reproach of talking with his mouth full.

It is curious that on one shore of Lake Michigan birds should be abundant in winter which on the opposite shore are accounted rare. I have said that the Michigan kinglets were my first winter birds of the kind. The white-breasted nuthatches that I met on that trip to Pokagon's home were also the first birds of their kind that I had seen in the winter months. The nuthatches certainly winter in northern Illi-

nois but it cannot be that they occur in anything like the numbers in which they are found in the same latitude in Michigan. Friends have occasionally told me of the visits paid by white-breasted nuthatches to January breakfast tables spread with suet for the benefit of the winter birds. It was never my luck, although I have made many a cold-weather trip for the purpose, to find one of these feathered acrobats within range of my rambles. It may go without saying, perhaps, that the bird is abundant on the west side of the lake in fall and spring.

While we kept to the highways we found the nuthatches on nearly every tree that grew along our course. They flew from trunk to trunk as though they were using the line of the road as a guide for a journey, but were making frequent stops at eating-houses along the way. The nuthatches were as silent as the kinglets were noisy. Only occasionally would a vigorous "quank, quank," break the stillness of the frosty air.

From the time we left the village behind I had seen almost constantly large flocks of birds flying over the fields but always keeping beyond the limit of identification. I asked my driver friend what they were, and he said, "Snowbirds." When I asked him what kind of snowbirds, he said, "Why, just snowbirds." By and by when the road turned suddenly around the corner of some woods we came on to a flock of the birds feeding in some bushes and on the ground which had been cleared of snow for some distance by the wind. The birds were not more than forty feet from us, and there were several hundreds of them. I asked my companion to take a good look and tell me what they were. He looked and again said, "Snowbirds," adding that that was what every-

body thereabouts called them. The birds were Canadian or tree sparrows. I will give the good Michigan folk credit for better judgment in the naming of this bird than had the people who were responsible for dubbing the junco, snowbird. The tree sparrow is much more of a snowbird than is the junco. As a matter of fact nearly all the juncos leave us at the first sight of a snowflake while tree sparrows stay with us and maintain their cheerfulness no matter how loud the wind howls nor how deep the snow lies. Not infrequently juncos and tree sparrows are found together but this is during the migrations or at the extreme southern limit of the tree sparrow's winter journeyings. Certain it is that no juncos had the hardihood to stay with those Michigan tree sparrows during that February month. Before the day was over I had seen four great flocks of the sparrows at close range, and not a junco feather did I see.

Upon a dead tree in a field, with its shapely form silhouetted against the sky, sat a sharp-shinned hawk. A flock of the tree sparrows was flitting about the tops of the snow banks not many yards beyond his perch. I had not the slightest doubt that the villian's maw already contained several of the birds. At any rate his hunger must have been pretty well satisfied for in the midst of plenty he made no attempt to secure food. I have confessed elsewhere to a sort of liking for the hawk; but the hawk is one thing and the sharp-shinned hawk is another. The scientists of Uncle Sam's agricultural department tell us that the sharp-shinned hawk is a double-dyed rascal, and they prove their point to my satisfaction. The Cooper's hawk is another villain and with his sharp-shinned friend has an inordinate appetite for song birds and small chickens. We may make friends of the

rest of the hawks, the scientists tell us, without laying ourselves open to the charge of keeping bad company.

The hawk sitting on his watch tower was the last glimpse of bird life that we had before Pokagon's hut came into view. Just before we reached it our horses and sleigh became fast in a huge snowdrift. The horses were in it much more than leg deep and all their efforts to free themselves and the cutter were unavailing. Soon we saw someone come to the doorway of the house. It was Pokagon. He looked across the snow and seeing our predicament came plowing through the big drifts to the rescue. He had just the trace of a smile on his face as he went to the back of the sleigh and put his shoulder well under the box. There was a heave forward and upward, an encouraging word to the horses, and with a great lurch the cutter was free. Pokagon was old but he had a deal of strength left in his arms, legs and body, and a talk with him showed likewise that no weakness had entered into his brain.

I am tempted to forget momentarily that this is a book of birds and tell a little something of this visit to the fireside of the famous Pottawattomie chief. He told the pathetic story of his attempt to get from the United States what was due the remnant of his people under their treaty rights. He told of violated promises and of perfidy whose recital would have better place in another "Century of Dishonor" than in this little volume. It was Pokagon's father who sold for three cents an acre the land on which now stands the city of Chicago. On that winter day in Michigan, the chief said: "They tell me that vast sums now are paid for a few feet of what was then sold for a trifle by the square mile. I inherited my father's rights and I also inherited the care of my people.



WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH.

They are scattered all through the country now and are few in numbers. The tribal relation is broken by their becoming citizens of the United States. All this has weakened my efforts to do for them what might be done. There is much more money due from the white people and I shall try to get it. I may die before success comes; if I do, my eldest son will take up what little there is left of my authority and the much that there is left of my troubles."

In his youth Pokagon hunted deer on the site of the hut in which he told his troubles that day. The old fellow knew Nature like a book. I drew him out on the subject of birds and mammals. When I spoke of my interest in birds and asked him if he knew them well he smiled a little and asked me if I had never read his writings on the birds. Then it was that I felt uncomfortable in being forced to confess that I had not had the pleasure. Pokagon then told me his legend of the robin, which I have since seen in birch-bark book form, and his story of the days when the chimney swifts dwelt in hollow trees and went in and out like black clouds and with a "roar of wings like the mutter of thunder."

We left the old Pottawattomie at dusk with a sort of a sadness on our spirits. The drive back to Hartford was under the glittering stars of a cloudless sky. Pokagon had cared for the inner cravings of his guests both man and beast and our rested and refreshed horses homeward bound needed neither the urging of voice nor whip. As we sped onward through the darkness, the thought that I was through with the birds for the day came into my mind. No sooner was the thought framed than from a wood by the roadside came the loud hoot of an owl, as if to say, "Day or night, you cannot get away from us."

CHAPTER VII

SOME ODD BITS OF BIRD LIFE

Somewhere in the woods west of Highland Park, Illinois, there lives a crow that bears on his back a pure white mark of the size and shape of a silver dollar. "Jim," for so I've named him, seems to know that he is distinguished above other birds and as a result he is much shyer than his brother crows. I ran across this crow curio in the winter of 1899. I have met him several times since then and I have satisfied myself that certain of the bird's characteristics are directly traceable to the big white spot on his back as the first cause. Jim has learned now that if he wishes any comfort in life he must flock by himself. There is no doubt in the minds of his fellow crows that white-spotted Jim is a freak. They keep him always at the distance of a big field's width, and any attempt on his part to approach nearer is met by assault.

The first time that I saw my friend Jim he was rounding the edge of a belt of timber and making for a plowed field in which four other crows were feeding. From their position they could by no chance have seen his back, and yet they seemed to know that the approaching bird was branded and a pariah. The feeding crows rose as one bird, met Jim half-way, and chased and buffeted him back into the woods. It was in this hurried retreat that Jim's white spot showed prominently and told better than words the story of his persecution. Is it not possible that the crows felt that their brother's marked peculiarity would attract

undue attention to them in case he were admitted to comradeship?

I have spoken elsewhere of the albino bobolink who was refused the companionship of his kind by all save one gentle bird whom he wooed and won for a mate. The bobolink was almost pure white while the crow's color was normal save for the small white patch on his black back. Birds, however, seem to regard the slightest variation from Nature's color rule as a disgrace to their kind. I met Jim during two seasons when the other crows were paired and keeping house. He was unquestionably leading a bachelor existence. Twice I saw other crows go out of their way to attack him, but despite his unhappy and lonely lot he clings tenaciously to life and only recently I have seen him foraging for food in the northern Illinois cornfields.

There is no love in my heart for the English sparrow. I have seen his persecution of our native birds until I cannot summon up a particle of sympathy for him, no matter into what straits he may come. I confess to a secret rejoicing every time a predatory shrike strikes a sparrow and trusses him for breakfast. The Britisher has a busy time all winter dodging the butcher-bird, and even after the enemy has gone to its northern home the sparrow trembles at passing shadows. I was idly watching a flock of sparrows one summer day feeding at the edge of the Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. Suddenly every individual in the flock crouched close to the ground, and then all rose like a feathered entity and made for shelter. No sparrow nor gathering of sparrows ever made a quicker movement than did that flock. The journey from the ground to the thickness of an evergreen tree standing in the grounds of a private residence, was made

in arrow-flight time. It is probable that no feathered gathering ever had a better apparent reason for adjourning than did that bunch of city sparrows. Coincident with the sight of their scurrying there fell upon my ear a dismal cry from above. It was a half croak, half file rasp, a sort of disaster-foreboding wail. Then a shadow swept over the ground, and a look upward showed me a big red and gray parrot making a lumbering flight in full and awful cry from the back piazza of a third-story flat. The sparrows probably have family traditions of all sorts of feathered horrors. It is doubtful, however, if a search of the archives of their remote ancestors would show anything descriptive of more terror of voice, beak, and plumage than that which had just broken on their sight and hearing. Small wonder is it that the sparrows took to the woods. The parrot lighted in a tree which towered above that in which the sparrows had taken refuge. The bird's intention of perching in this tree was no sooner expressed by the direction of its flight than the sparrow horde left one hiding-place and fled to another.

English sparrows, like all other birds, are inquisitive, and when they saw that this bird nightmare, which strangely had chosen a bright day to be abroad, showed no signs of hostility they gathered about it by the hundreds. They hurled all sorts of names at the parrot. Never before had I realized the extent of the sparrow vocabulary. The parrot made its awkward way from tree to tree, followed by all the sparrows resident in that section of the city. The feathered street gamins gave over eating and the delights of fighting for the pure pleasure of swearing at this interrupter of their breakfast. Poll contented herself with croaking at the assembled throng, and with occasionally asking an individual sparrow for a

cracker. The sparrows were gaining courage, and apparently were contemplating an attack in force when a boy who knew how to climb trees captured Poll and carried her back to her cage.

Some birds have become accustomed to many of the appurtenances of civilization. Those that have been shot at once, or have seen their kind shot at, know a gun as far as they can see it. They will all but perch on the shoulder of an unarmed man, but will keep a ten-acre lot between them and a man with a breech-loader. Glass, however, is one of man's belongings which the most astute bird as yet fails thoroughly to understand. A window which has light back of it as well as in front of it is a perfect death trap for birds of many species. The oven-bird, sometimes called the golden-crowned thrush, is constantly dashing against window panes, always to its discomfiture and frequently to its death. One of these birds at noon one day brought up against a pane of glass in the window of a great department store on one of the busiest street corners of the city of Chicago. The bird recovered itself, but in its bewilderment it left the window only to fly into the crowded mart through an open door. The oven-bird was caught and caged. Then it promptly and properly died. All caged birds ought to die in self-defense. The Audubon Society members say that death for the songsters is preferable to imprisonment. There are few bird-lovers who will try to gainsay the society's dictum.

Not long ago a kingfisher tried to fly into the Academy of Sciences through a pane of plate glass. The shock killed the bird. It now stands stuffed with cotton and plaster of paris looking out of the very window against which it hurled itself to death.

I once found the body of a small hawk which had met death in a peculiar way. I doubt if a stranger fate ever overtook any living creature. I found the bird hanging by the upper tendons of its left wing to a barb on the strand of a wire fence. Unquestionably the hawk was pursuing its quarry when it struck the fence with terrific force. The barb entered the skin and tendons of the wing and held the bird fast. Such was the impetus acquired from the force of the flight that the bird's body swung around the wire strand two or three times, a fact shown by the twisted condition of the tendons. The hawk was dead when discovered, but whether the shock of the impact killed it or whether it died as the result of the fierce struggle to free itself cannot be told. There was no wound save that of the broken wing and torn skin and tendons, a circumstance that shows that the bird was not shot and afterward impaled upon the wire. Doubtless some meadow mouse is still congratulating itself on the narrowest escape of its life, and on the death of one of its implacable enemies.

Recently the undoubtedly wise and humane members of the Illinois legislature granted the right hitherto denied, to shoot during certain months of the year the mourning-dove, the emblem of peace and of all gentleness. I am charitable enough to doubt if any member of the state body would have voted for such a provision of the game law if he could have seen the exhibition of courage and devotion to duty by a dove that once came under my notice. A pair of the birds had built a nest about four feet from the ground in a little evergreen tree on a side hill. The nesting site was in the outskirts of one of Chicago's suburbs. The month of the nest building, April, had been unusually dry; the fallen oak

leaves and the grass where the tender green had not yet sprung were as dry as chips. A fire, started by a spark from a passing engine, spread rapidly and ran along the hillside toward the dove's nest. I knew the location of the bird's home and I watched the mother dove all through the subsequent ordeal. The flames reached the tree upon which the frail nest was placed, and though the fire mounted high enough for the dove to feel the intensity of the heat, she lifted not a wing to leave her charge. The flames swept under her and passed on, but for fully five minutes thereafter the devoted mother was shrouded in smoke. The bird's courage was of little avail, however, for some creature, man or beast, robbed the nest the day after the fire.

The jay is unquestionably a good deal of a rascal, but he is one of the most interesting creatures that fly. I confess to a liking for him though he does steal eggs once in a while and is the common scold of every bird neighborhood. I watched a pair of jays once while they built their nest in a small fir tree in the dooryard of a hotel at Highland Park. The birds built the bulkiest jay's nest I had ever seen. When the structure was about two-thirds completed I heard a loud jay conversation in the lane back of the hotel and I looked over the fence to discover the cause. The two jays were on an ash pile, and were having an animated discussion about a very dirty paper collar which lay between them. It was apparent that one of the birds doubted the utility of the collar as nest-making material, while the other was an advocate of trying it if for no other reason than that it was something new. Womanlike, Madame Jay finally had her way (I suppose it was the madame), and into the wall of the nest the paper collar went. When the home was completed six eggs

were deposited, one more than I had ever before found in a jay's nest. Mother Jay staid on the nest continuously for fourteen days with the exception of a few short trips for daily bread. On the fourteenth day the young jays ought to have been poking their heads through the shells. They didn't poke. Mrs. Bluejay kept on sitting. Eighteen days had passed and then the husband began to plead with his mate in the few soft notes which he could command. He asked her to leave the nest, but she paid no heed. Three weeks were up. Young jays that occupied a nest whose foundation had been laid many days later than that of the fir tree home, were feathering out and clamoring for food. This fact was duly called to the attention of Mrs. Jay by her husband. She wouldn't budge an inch. He made many trips to and from a laden cherry tree, carrying his spouse specimens of the finest fruit and telling her there were thousands more like them on the tree. There was found one female who was proof against the fruit temptation. Five days more passed, and the devoted sitting bird looked tired and seedy. Her husband, who throughout the ordeal had confined himself solely to mellifluous pleadings, now got mad. He flew to a perch a foot above his sitting mate, cocked his head on one side, looked down at her, and with marked emphasis and significance uttered the one word, "Jay." Sarcasm won and Madame left her nest and six eggs for good and aye. After the desertion of the nest I took it down and broke the eggs. They were dried up and showed no signs that incubation had advanced beyond a day or two.

One or two of my experiences makes me bold to say that I believe the birds are much hardier creatures than generally is supposed. It is something of a journey from our middle-

western fields to the rocky little spot known as David's Island, in Long Island Sound. Let us make the journey if only for the sake of a story of the hardihood of a song sparrow. I spent the winter of the year 1888 at David's Island which was then a United States military station. The first week in March a song sparrow arrived on the island and made his headquarters near a woodpile at the government dock. The bird sang daily from the top of an upright pole which marked one of the divisions of the woodpile into cords. At the end of the second week there came that awful blizzard which buried buildings in snow, rooted trees out of the earth, and cost many human lives. The storm was the worst in the history of the land and it raged unremittingly for two days. Then there came a lull; the sun shone on a buried country; the wooden barracks of the army recruits in places were hidden from sight. So terrific had been the storm that strong men sentinels had been overcome at their posts. On the morning of the clearing of the skies the soldiers of the garrison attacked the snow-drifts and broke a road to the woodpile where three days before the sparrow sang. When the last great white mass was overcome the attacking party was greeted by as cheerful a note as ever fell on soldiers' ears. The minstrel was the song sparrow with his melody still unfrozen in his throat and with a spirit that the storm could not conquer.

It would be edifying to a degree, doubtless, if we could put ourselves in touch with the thoughts of birds. I would give much to know just what it was that prompted a red-headed woodpecker to a certain line of conduct on one occasion. I concluded he was moved by a spirit of pure mischief and nothing else, but possibly he had some graver reason in

his head. I saw a brilliant Baltimore oriole sunning himself on a limb and holding in his bill a piece of newspaper as large as himself. I never knew an oriole to use newspaper for nesting material, and although it was homesteading time I did not think that the bird seriously contemplated playing the vireo and using wall-paper in his residence. There was a red-headed woodpecker on the trunk of the tree. He seemed to take something more than passing interest in the oriole and his bit of paper. Perhaps his thought was, "There's a foolish bird laboring with something that it has no possible use for." Whatever the thought, the red-head presently darted out, snatched the bit of paper from the oriole, and flew far across the field with it to another tree. There he dropped the paper to the ground and began a search for grubs in the bark. The woodpecker had no more use for the paper than did the oriole. Perhaps its purloining of the paper was prompted simply by a bad temper. It has often been intimated that infirmities of temper are not infrequently the accompaniments of red heads.

One night in late April a brilliant male scarlet tanager flew through the open door into a cigar store situated on one of the busiest corners in the city of Chicago. The bird took a perch on top of one of the wall cases and proceeded to make himself perfectly at home. It is a curious fact that not one of the scores of people who visited the cigar store during the next twenty-four hours was able to give the bird its proper name. It was the belief of all that some rare bird, originally from the tropics, had escaped from its cage. The scarlet tanagers are abundant birds in the Chicago suburbs, and the fact that no one knew the songster is a sufficient commentary on the lack of the observing power of the mass of people. The



BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER.

tanager was supplied with food by the proprietor of the store. The door was left open daily for hours and no attempt was made to restrain the bird from leaving. He seemed perfectly satisfied with his quarters, however, and staid in the cigar store until November, when he died. It is curious to know that the bird did not change plumage as the fall approached, as is the custom of the tribe. His scarlet coat was as brilliant in November as in May. The fact that the store which he made his home was pretty well filled with cigar smoke during the greater part of the time did not seem to interfere in the least with the comfort or the cheerful spirit of the tanager.

CHAPTER VIII

IN GOD'S ACRE

People who are striving for effect sometimes call burial-grounds "cities of silence." That's all well enough, perhaps, poetically, but in May and June cemeteries are anything but silent. The songsters found out long ago that a meed of protection was given them inside cemetery walls that was given nowhere else. Sentiment is of course largely responsible for this, for no matter how active may be the nest-robbing proclivities of the small boy, he withholds his hand in the graveyard. The birds throng in the city parks during the migrations, but it is in the city cemeteries that they make their homes. Oakwoods, Rose Hill, and Graceland, in Chicago, resound with song all through the birds' courtship season. Nearly every tree and shrub in these burial-places holds the home of a songster. In late June young robins and bronzed grackles in hundreds are scattered all over the lawns. The catbirds and brown thrashers are in every thicket, and the wood thrush tinkles his twilight bell on every side. Birds that in other places are shy and timid in the cemeteries become familiar and fearless.

Graceland cemetery is wholly within the city of Chicago. Within its limits birds can be found that seldom are found elsewhere. The cardinal grosbeaks are rare enough in northern Illinois. I have seen only one pair in a wild state in the vicinity of Chicago and this pair I found in Graceland cemetery. The male made a perch of the tip of a towering tree,

and there with the sun shining full on his scarlet coat, he sang and whistled in the perfect ecstasy of living. He soon had an audience, for from all parts of the burial-ground the people gathered, attracted by the magic of the voice. Had that southern songster dared to give that solo in Lincoln Park I should have trembled for his life, but within the cemetery walls I felt that he was safe. There are people who, when looking at the bright plumage of a bird or listening to its sweet song, can think of only one of two things, killing it or caging it. I heard expressed that afternoon, while the grosbeak was singing, a dozen wishes: "I'd like to have that fellow in a cage." It is my sincere belief that the first bird that Adam saw was pecking at a cherry, and that the first bird that Eve saw was some scarlet tanager flashing across a sunlit meadow. Adam said, "The bird is a thief"; Eve said, "The bird is a beauty." From that day to this the hand of man and the head of woman have been against the bird.

The female cardinal is as musical as her mate, though she has but a small share of his beauty. When the male cardinal had tired his throat with his singing that afternoon the female took up the strain and sang alone for fully five minutes. Then she joined the male and together they flew beyond the cemetery walls where I was afraid their beauty of plumage and voice would invite destruction. I heard from a friend, however, that the cardinals were again in Graceland a few days later.

In late April, 1900, the evening grosbeaks put in an appearance in Graceland cemetery. They were found by two members of the Audubon Society who were out on a search for spring birds. The evening grosbeak is in its coloring one of

Nature's handsome children. The body of the male is brilliant yellow, while the tail is jet black. The wings are sharply contrasted black and white. It is not at all a graceful bird. Its body is chunky and its movements are awkward, the legs and feet seemingly being unequal to the task of supporting the bulk of body and feathers. The discoverers of the grosbeaks were kind enough to tell me of the birds' presence in Graceland and I went with them the next day and found the creatures in the place they had first been seen. There is something very childlike perhaps in the joy one feels in making a new bird acquaintance. I never before had seen a living evening grosbeak. There are men who have made ornithology a vocation rather than an avocation, and yet never have met this bird. The Graceland grosbeaks spent about half the time in a clump of evergreens, flying from there to some box-elders where they would feast for a while on the buds. There were between twenty and thirty individuals in the flock. Within a stone's throw of the birds' feeding-place workmen were hammering spikes on an elevated railroad then under construction. The din was nearly deafening. Added to this, a locomotive with a tool train was puffing backward and forward on the surface road beneath the elevated structure. The grosbeaks paid no attention to the racket. They also appeared absolutely fearless of the three human beings who stood just beneath them almost within arm's reach and ogled them through opera-glasses. Although the grosbeaks were strangers in this part of the country, they seemed to know the Illinois bluejay well enough and to share with other birds the antipathy felt for this feathered thief. One of the male grosbeaks attacked a jay that had approached the feeding-place, and the two fought in midair. I have told else-

where of a fight between a bluejay and a scarlet tanager and of the bewildering confusion of color beauty that the combat presented. In the grosbeak-bluejay fight there was a change of color scheme, but the confusion and the beauty were there not a bit abated. The grosbeak thrashed the jay, whereat three human spectators rejoiced in concert with a dozen ruby-crowned kinglets who had watched the row from a thicket. The grosbeaks disappeared from Graceland on the afternoon of Friday, April 20th, thereby disappointing some bird-lovers who made belated attempts to see them.

I have just called the jay a thief. I have called him so a number of times, and I will call him so again when opportunity offers. He is a thief, but he is an interesting thief and I don't know that we could do without him. What would the doctors do if they didn't have criminals to study in order to form new degeneracy theories? Why, the doctors would lose half the fun of their profession. When you see a jay sneaking off through the trees with his bill spiked through a stolen robin's egg, you know at once why everything that wears feathers hates him. A Kentucky friend once told me of seeing a jay deliberately lift four newly hatched mockingbirds out of the nest and drop them to the ground, where they perished. I had thought there must have been some mistake about this story, for while I knew the jay was fond of eggs, I hardly thought he was hardened enough to commit murder. I am no longer in doubt. I found in Rose Hill cemetery the nest of a wood pewee. It was a beautiful little lichen-made saucer resting on the upper side of a broad horizontal limb of an oak. I visited the nest a number of times and watched the father bird launch out from the tree to snap up occasional insect trifles. He was a pugnacious little fellow and he kept

all the birds of the neighborhood at a distance. A pair of jays had a nest in an evergreen tree not far away, and knowing the jays' thieving proclivities the wood pewees waged constant war against them. The appearance of either one of the pair within twenty yards of the pewees' home was the signal for an attack. The jay always fled. One day three little creatures poked their way into the world through the eggshells in the oak tree nest. There were enough insects near the oak tree, apparently, to supply the wants of parents and children. It was seldom that either one of the pewees wandered away from home. I have never been able to explain why it was that on one afternoon as I stood watching the birds, they both left the oak and flew to a catalpa fully fifty yards away. No sooner had the little guardians left their charge than one of the jays came like a flash from the evergreen, and before I could realize what was being done, much less interfere, the three infant pewees were lifted from the nest and dropped one by one to the gravel walk below. The parent pewees soon came back, and their mourning is with me yet.

In Graceland there is a little lake whose waters and the perfect peace of the surroundings attract many of the wilder birds. One April morning I flushed a woodcock from under the trees on the shore. In the early spring mallards not infrequently rest in the sedges near the little island with its drooping willows. The grebes, that are hunted mercilessly throughout the entire year because women covet their silver breasts for bonnet decoration, make this Graceland pond a resting place for days together while on the weary journey northward. No gun flashes through the bushes on the shore, and the harassed birds find peace and food. Three of the grebes stayed on the waters of the pond for ten days, and

became so tame that they paid no attention to the curious people who watched their swimming and diving feats. A female blue-bill duck came into the Graceland pond one morning and was so pleased with the situation that she stayed for two weeks. Before the blue-bill left it was possible to approach within a few yards of her without causing her either to dive or to dart away.

Seven small herons dropped down to the edge of the cemetery pond one day and when startled by approaching footsteps, they flew to the island and perched on one of the willows. There they drew their heads down into their shoulders and stood motionless. It has always been a matter of regret that those herons were not positively identified. The green heron is a much more abundant bird than is his little blue cousin. It was a dark day when the birds were seen, and as there was no way of reaching the island, distance forbade certain identification. A fellow bird-lover, whose opinion carries treble the weight of mine, was almost willing to say positively, "Little blue herons." Probably they were, but neither of us has dared to add the name of the bird to our Chicago lists.

I give herewith a list of the birds that probably nest every year in the Chicago cemeteries. In many instances the nests have been found, and in the other cases the birds have either been seen with young or have been found to be resident during the breeding season: Robin, flicker, red-headed woodpecker, chickadee, kingbird, phoebe, wood pewee, least fly catcher, bronzed grackle, rose-breasted grosbeak, song sparrow, chip-ping sparrow, vesper sparrow, catbird, brown thrasher, yellow warbler, redstart, red-eyed vireo, wood thrush, bluebird, house wren, bluejay, indigo bird, Baltimore oriole, orchard

oriole, scarlet tanager, cedarbird, cow-bird (parasite), yellow-billed cuckoo, black-billed cuckoo, mourning dove, crow, loggerhead shrike, towhee, goldfinch, ruby-throated hummingbird, oven bird.

It is probable that some of the hawks and owls nest within the cemeteries' limits, though I know of no recorded instances. The nests of the meadowlark and bobolink both have been found on a patch of ground belonging to the Rose Hill cemetery authorities and lying just outside the fence of the cemetery proper. When it is taken into consideration that these burial-grounds lie within the limits of a city of nearly two million inhabitants, there will come a realization that there is much wild life in the very heart of civilization.

Although the journey is generally made the other way, it may not be amiss to go from the cemetery to the church. I have never found owls in the graveyard, but I have found them in the sanctuary. During the winter of 1895 several owls, which I believe were of the long-eared species, took up a temporary residence in the steeple of Unity Church, Walton Place and Dearborn Avenue, Chicago. The church steeple for years had been the home of a flock of pigeons. When the owls appeared the pigeons had to seek other quarters, though the chances are that several members of the flock were sacrificed to owlish appetites before the moving was accomplished. One evening during a heavy snow storm I saw two of the owls sitting in a tree on Delaware Place and blinking at a strong electric light which stood not ten feet away. During the same winter the screech owls visited the city in numbers. They were particularly common along Dearborn Avenue. One of the little fellows took up his abode under the porch of a residence and stayed there for ten days. It is a sorrow

to be compelled to record that many of these visitors lost their lives at the hands of the street boys. It is particularly sorrowful to record this because the chances are that the owls were doing their full duty in the matter of killing English sparrows.

Standing in Graceland cemetery at the height of the bird concert season, and hearing ten songsters at once breaking the silence of the place, I have wondered whether the birds loved to hear themselves sing. I suppose that they would make music for the world if they were as deaf as posts. I have a reason for this supposition. It is some distance from Graceland cemetery, Chicago, to Goat Island, Niagara River, but I must go that far for my reason. Since New York state has made a park of the island and has enforced rules for the regulation of lawless visitors, the birds have gone back to the place and have made of it their summer home. Goat Island lies in the river on the brink of the precipice between the American and the Canadian Falls. It is eternally deluged, as one might say, with the roar of the waters. In places upon Goat Island it is hard to make the human voice heard. The season was a little late for the singing of the birds when I visited the island in July. The song sparrow, however, sings every month of the year, and one of these little fellows was perched on the limb of a tree close to the great fall and was trying to let the sight-seeing visitors know that he was singing a solo. The noise of the waters was thunderous. Birds may have acute ears, but I doubt very much if that song sparrow heard his own sweet strains. He was prompted to sing, and sing he must, though the song was lost in the roar of the falls.

There is plenty of excuse for the visitor to Niagara,

even though he be a bird-lover, for seeing nothing but the ever-changing color beauty of the plunging water. I did get my eyes away from that magnificent sight long enough to note that myriads of swallows were passing and repassing through the great cloud of spray and mist that rises from the rocks where the falling waters strike. People approaching the falls from below on the venturesome Maid of the Mist are compelled to wear rubber clothing to escape a drenching from the dashing spray. It is heavier in places than the heaviest rain, and yet through it the swallows were constantly darting taking a shower bath without apparently wetting so much as a feather. Most of the birds that I saw on that late July morning were tree swallows. They constantly cut through the bars of the floating rainbow which in sunshine is ever present at Niagara. There was no hue in those broad color bands, more beautiful than the shining green that the sunlight brought out as it struck the upper feathers of those darting swallows.



EVENING GROSBEEK.

CHAPTER IX

WHERE THE BLACK TERN BUILDS

The little village of Worth lies just beyond the smoke of factory-filled Chicago. It is on the marshes of Worth that the black terns build their nests; it is in the thorn thickets that hedge the pastures that the loggerhead shrikes make their homes; the rails, the redwings, and the wrens haunt the reedy swamps; and the hawks and the crows live in the heavy timber. Outside of a race-track and the many birds that flock in its fields, Worth has few attractions to offer. The race-track draws thousands of people daily for a short season, but the birds' visitors are few. In no other place, perhaps, so near the great city, could the black terns nest in peace. Certain it is that Worth is the only place readily accessible to the city bird-student where these "soft-breasted birds of the sea" may be found during the season of courtship and house-keeping. Black terns are abundant in the shop windows and upon the hats of thoughtless women. The shop birds and the bonnet birds are wired and twisted into positions of grotesque ugliness. There never was a line of beauty in the stuffed bird of a milliner. Would that woman could see it! The black terns of Worth are living; the sweep of their wings is as graceful as are the curving blades of the swamp flags. There is a price upon the head of the black tern because the milliner covets the bird that it may be used as a means for a second temptation of woman. Neither the black tern of Worth nor the Wilson's tern nesting in northern Wisconsin can long sur-

vive the demands of fashion for which the word cruel is far too feeble an adjective.

I wandered one late May day through the music-filled fields of Worth. My destination was the Phillips farm, which lies about a mile from the depot. The orioles were whistling wherever a treetop offered a swaying perch. The meadows were literally filled with singing bobolinks. I passed a little country school-house; the children were singing the opening song of the morning. On the ridge-pole above them was perched a black-throated bunting, who was adding his mite of music to swell the chorus. A little farther on I made the acquaintance, that morning, of the grasshopper sparrow. It is a tiny field-loving bird, with a song which much resembles the sound made by the insect for which it is named. One of the sparrows took perch on a slender weed which its weight was not sufficient to bend, and there gave me a sample of its vocal power, though, perhaps, I might better say vocal weakness. It will not do, however, to despise the grasshopper sparrow's song, for some day when greed has caused the killing of all the larger birds we may turn for enjoyment to this humble little feathered rustic.

On either side of the Phillips farmhouse there is an orchard, while hedges that do duty as fences extend in all directions. On that May morning at the end of the porch there were four wild rose bushes in full bloom. A syringa, with its burden of white blossoms, flanked the line of roses. In the syringa bush a catbird was singing, and strangely enough, he forgot to throw into the midst of his melody the harsh note that so often mars his performance. I stood for a minute enjoying the bloom of the roses and the song of the bird. The singer left the discordant element out of its song, to be sure, but

discord came in the shape of an English sparrow, who viciously attacked the catbird who had been presumptuous enough to lift its voice in a British sparrow's presence. The American fought faithfully, but it was no match for the heavy-beaked alien. I drove the sparrow away. A few minutes afterward I found its big bulky home in a cherry tree. I tore the nest down and destroyed the eggs. Cruel? Not a bit of it. Cruel to one kind of bird, perhaps, but kindness to an hundred others. Go thou and do likewise.

At the end of a little lane that leads pastureward from the house is an Osage orange, half tree and half shrub. It is the sole surviving corner-piece of two hedges of bygone days. In this growth was a nest of the loggerhead shrike. This bird spends its winters in the South, but comes to this latitude to breed, replacing here the great northern shrike which comes from the far North in the winter and scurries back Arcticward at the first suggestion of spring. The loggerhead lives on small birds, small snakes, and large insects. Being a predatory creature, it supposedly should be possessed of some courage, and yet here was a loggerhead shrike that had five dependent young ones in its nest, and still did not dare to come within a field's width of its home while trespassing man was about. A robin or a jay would have been at the post of danger, and if it could have done nothing else, would have roundly berated the intruder. The loggerhead sat on the far-away fence-post and was apparently perfectly unconcerned while effort was made to peek into its nest. Some friends who had joined me undertook to take a snap-shot of the shrike's home and young. The nest was so well fortified with twigs and branches, each of which carried a score of thorns, that the photographing process was beset with difficulties.

To the right of the nest, pierced through the neck and hanging from a thorn was the half-eaten body of a small snake, placed there by the shrike perhaps to provide the larder against any future scarcity of living game. As soon as we had left the vicinity of the nest the shrike went back to its young and doubtless gave them each a bit of snake steak to make them forget their fright.

The Worth marsh, which stretches away for acres from the foot of the orchard, is a fruitful field for the study of bird-life. When we had opened the old-fashioned gate at the lane's end, we could see a glistening patch of clear water far beyond the rushes' tops. The dark forms of birds were wheeling about above its surface and their cries were borne down to us by the breeze. We skirted the marsh and approached the open water, and there through our glasses had a perfect view of the darting birds. They were dark, almost black, but there was a gloss to their feathers which the sun's rays let us see from time to time as the birds kept up their changeful flight. They were black terns that had left the waters of the larger lakes to come to this place of sedges to rear their young. The red-winged blackbirds nest by hundreds in the reeds of this great swamp. At the time of our visit the nesting season was at its height. As we walked into the swamp regardless of mud and water, the male redwings met us and hovered over our heads. They asked us more vigorously than politely to turn back. The redwing is protected by law in the state of Illinois, but in nearly all the other states he is put beyond the statute's pale. The bird unquestionably has a weakness for grain, but the good that he does in insect-eating fairly balances the evil of his life. That he is a beauty in his black blouse with its shoulder knots of

scarlet and gold, none will gainsay. Can't we give a kernel or two of corn ungrudgingly to a creature that adds something of living beauty to the dreary wastes of swamp-land?

The long-billed marsh wrens are abundant in the Worth country. These birds have the curious habit of building several nests before they make up their minds which one to occupy. The scientists have been hard at work for years trying to find a reason for this bit of wren freakiness. The scientists are still at work, for no one yet knows the reason save the wren, and the wren won't tell. We flushed from the edge of the marsh that morning a Bartram's sandpiper. This bird is, I believe, the largest of the sandpiper kind. It makes its summer home at Worth, and occasionally has for a neighbor its plover cousin, the lesser yellow-legs. When splashing through the water to get a better look at the sandpiper who had taken to some high ground, I found floating the broken egg of a king rail. The egg told the story of a nest built too low, of heavy night rains, and a flooded abode. King rails are interesting creatures, notwithstanding the fact that it is to be doubted if they have any brain. They are big, blundering, stupid birds who get themselves into all sorts of predicaments, out of which, of themselves, they can find no means of extrication. A friend of mine once found a king rail standing in the middle of the sidewalk near the corner of Schiller Street and the Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. The bird paid but little heed to passers, but seemed to lack the wit to get away from such uncongenial surroundings as stone pavements and brick walls. The men in a North Clark Street barber-shop in the same city were astounded one day to see an ungainly bird make its way through the open door to the center of the shop, where it calmly surveyed the surroundings.

Another king rail took possession of a bedroom in the second story of a Chicago residence. The bird absolutely refused to allow itself to be "shooed" out of the window through which it had come. It showed no fear of human beings, and allowed itself to be picked up without resistance. When it was put through the window it took to flight readily enough, but the chances are that before it had traveled far it managed to get into some other fix.

There is something of the savage left in us all. I am free to confess that I like to see birds fight. I don't mean that I wish them to fight, but if they must fight I like to see the fracas. In a tree in a field back from the Worth swamp was a scarlet tanager. It was sitting there peacefully enough, and apparently enjoying the view, when a bluejay dropped down from above and went at it beak and claw. I fully expected to see the tanager turn tail and flee before the face of his assailant, but it surprised me and won my admiration by doing nothing of the kind. It gave the bluejay blow for blow. The combatants half flew, half fell to the ground, clawing, pecking, scratching, and screaming. There was a bewildering brilliancy of moving color. There was another witness to this fight besides the human beings who were looking at it with all the interest ever centered on a ring contest. The bluejay's mate was in the treetop, but made no effort to take a claw in the affair until she thought that her spouse was getting the worst of it. Then she came down hurtling, and joining forces with her mate, soon convinced the tanager that it had enough. The jays did not follow the defeated bird, who made off like a scarlet streak to the shelter of the woods.

On our way back to the farm-house we saw a hawk quartering the marsh in search of prey. It was doubtless a marsh

harrier, though it looked much like a duck hawk. I have elsewhere spoken of my admiration for the hawk family. The duck hawk is a true falcon. He is the epicure of the feathered race. He disdains mice and barnyard fowl, and lives largely upon game. His delight is in the chase, and the rapidity of his flight is as the passage of light. He overtakes the teal or the mallard, and seizing his quarry in midair, bears it away for a feast. The utter fearlessness of this wandering falcon was shown not long ago at Calumet Lake. Some duck hunters had built a blind, behind which they crouched in their boats. Two ducks came into the decoys. Both men fired a barrel each, and both missed. At that instant, like a bolt from the sky, a falcon descended and struck down one of the ducks within twenty yards of the blind. Instantly the hidden hunters fired the second barrels of their guns at hawk and duck and both birds fell to the water. The men put out from behind their blinds to pick up the birds. The duck was dead; the hawk, still living, though wounded unto death, remained with its talons sunk deep into the feathers of its quarry, and facing the oncomers with blazing eyes stood ready to give them battle. They killed the falcon with the stroke of an oar. The hand of man is ever against the hawk. When the last duck hawk is dead there will have passed a creature with more of the essence of true courage in its being than exists in the carcasses of a dozen of the cowards who have brought extinction to its race.

I have spoken of the difficulties that beset the photographer who attempted to make the young loggerhead shrieks "look pleasant" while he was taking their pictures. Bird photography is for the bird-lover who has more patience than I can ever hope to claim. In connection with this shriek

"sitting," however, I cannot forbear to tell of another experience which befell two of us while we were hunting birds with a camera. A pair of bluejays, early in May, 1901, built a nest in an oak tree not more than five feet from the window of a room in a Lake Forest home. The nest was below the level of the window-sill and its interior was in plain view. The birds, when building, paid little attention to observers who sat in the window. Finally, however, when the eggs were laid and Mrs. Jay had taken upon herself the task of sitting, it was proposed to take a photograph of the nest and bird through the overlooking window. Most people will declare that nothing sweet in the way of sound ever issued from the mouth of a bluejay. Nine-tenths of the year the jay's jargon is a pain to the sensitive ear. During the rest of the time, however, the jay has one liquid note which is as pleasing as almost any of Nature's sounds. Master Jay reserves this sweet syllable for the benefit of Miss Jay, whom he hopes before May Day will consent to change her estate in life. I think that I have heard the jay's voice at its best and at its worst, but it was left for that morning when the photograph of the nest in the oak tree was to be taken for a certain Mrs. Jay to outdo in loudness, harshness, and extent of vocabulary the vocal performance of any bird to which I ever before had listened.

It was the habit of Mr. Jay to come regularly and at short intervals to the oak-tree home to feed his sitting spouse. It happened just as the formidable-looking camera was being adjusted and focused on the sitting bird that the husband arrived with a tidbit for his wife. He saw the frowning instrument and fled incontinently. Then it was proposed to wait until he returned, so that a snap-shot might be made of both

birds while the feeding was in progress. The patient photographer sat with one hand on the bulb, waiting for the reappearance of the male. He did not come. The female sat on her nest, held there by mother love, though there was a great fear in her eye as she looked at the gun-like affair in the window above. An hour passed, and still Mr. Jay did not appear. He was finally located by an interested observer in a tree at the far-off edge of the lawn. He was keeping up his watch on the nest and on the infernal machine in the window, but he dared not approach. An hour and a half had gone by, and Mrs. Jay was getting hungry and restless. She had long since overcome her fear of the camera. Two hours passed. Birds require a constant supply of food and Mrs. Jay was at the famine point. Suddenly she spied her husband in the tree beyond the flower beds. She left her nest and made for her spouse like a flash. She perched just above his head, and then there followed a scolding and berating that has no parallel in bird families. The madame called her husband a lazy, shiftless, good-for-nothing coward. She called his attention to the fact that for two hours she had sat under the frowning face of the awful thing in the window, while he, lost to all jayhood and to all memory of courtship promises, had not dared so much as approach the nesting-tree, even for the moment needed to feed his faithful wife. For fully two minutes the air was filled with jay ejaculations of wrath and contempt, and none of these ejaculations came from Mr. Jay. He took the tirade meekly. The pitch of Mrs. Jay's voice, coupled with the choice selection of adjectives which she hurled at her husband, brought an interested audience, composed of all the bird residents of the neighborhood. Finally madame broke off short and made her way back in all haste

to cover her eggs from the chill air of the morning. The instant his wife was off for home, Mr. Jay darted down into a thicket and at once reappeared with a fat morsel of food with which he struck out like a blue streak for the nest in the oak. He fed Mrs. Jay, and a satisfactory snap-shot photograph was taken of the operation. After feeding his wife, the husband looked at her and uttered the one mellifluous note known to the jay language, and Mrs. Jay, womanlike, was mollified.



TOGGRETHAD SURINE

CHAPTER X

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

In the bird's year the season of song is the season of tragedy. The wonder is that during the nest-building time birds have the heart to sing at all. Danger is ever present, and it is probably not an exaggeration to say that disaster attends at least one-half of the attempts of the songsters to rear their young. There are so many casualties among bird homes that the nesting season holds for the field student rather more of pain than of pleasure. It has struck me many times that the birds must feel that the whole world is against them when they are trying so patiently and so bravely to see that their kind does not perish from the earth. From the moment that the first egg appears the shadow of danger is across the threshold of the little home. There are the perils of wind and flood, of egg-loving snakes, and of egg-collecting boys. A little later, when the young appear, there is danger from prowling cats and looting owls, and from men nest-robbers, who pretend to think that the proper sphere of a wild bird lies within the limits of a cage.

The books tell us that many species of birds build their nests near the habitations of men because of the protection that is afforded by such locations. The theory is, that owls, hawks, and snakes avoid the vicinity of civilization, and thus the nesting birds are relieved from the fear of the depredations of these natural enemies. There is another side to the question, however. The minute that the bird places its home on

the pillar of the porch, in the lilac bush of the garden, or in the maple at the doorstep, it invites destruction for itself and young at the claws of the family cat, a creature which, unfortunately, few households are without. The very openness of the nesting sites chosen makes of the eggs or of the young a temptation to the badly trained boy, who nine times out of ten finds himself unable to resist. As a deduction from observations that have extended through many nesting seasons, I don't hesitate to say that I think the part of wisdom belongs to the bird who builds in the wilds and gives man, cats, and boys a wide berth.

It is curious thing that, all things being apparently equal, some of the birds that nest in the haunts of men have much better success with their families than have others. The bluejay, one of the characteristic birds of the Middle West, is handicapped in his struggle for existence by his brilliant plumage. Notwithstanding this, the jay abounds and will continue to abound unless his traits of character undergo a radical change. A jay, building in an evergreen on one side of a doorstep, will be rejoicing in five healthy offspring able to fly and to care for themselves, while the robin, building in the maple on the other side of the doorstep, is bewailing the disappearance of its last fledgeling into the mouth of a cat. Accidents to jays' nests are rare. It builds as strong a structure as does the robin, and as a rule, Madame Jay insists that the young jays shall stay in the nest until their wings are strong and fully feathered. Robins have not the same excellent control over their babies. The young robin, like the young crow of the children's story, gets restless and wants to see the world at a time when the only journey it can make is a high and lofty tumble from the nest to the ground. You may pick up

a young robin, put it back in the nest, and you will be called upon within five minutes to repeat the operation. The distress of the old birds, when a youngster tumbles out, is pitiful. Possibly in the course of a few eons they may discover the secret of parental control. At one time I had under observation five robins' nests and six jays' nests. Five of the jay broods were led forth into the world in safety, while disaster came to four of the robin households. It is curious to note that the pair of robins that succeeded in raising a brood built the nest on a crossbeam between two pillars of a piazza which was frequented by many people all through the day. It was a cat neighborhood. The nest was so placed that Tom and Tabby could not get at it, though they watched it daily from every vantage point. This pair of robins had more sense than most of the tribe. There were five robin children in the nest. When the time came for them to leave, the male robin took a perch just outside the nest and coaxed the two strongest of the fledgeling birds to leave. They stood on the edge of the nest while the father took three or four short flights by way of example. Finally the two little ones launched out together, and with their father at their side they succeeded in making the first flight carry them a distance of fully forty yards. They plumped to the ground pretty hard, but in a minute they recovered, and their father soon urged them to another effort, this time upward to the safe retreat of a heavy foliaged tree. The other three young ones remained in the nest twenty-four hours longer, and were then led forth by the mother. For two weeks the brood remained in the vicinity of the nest, the father caring constantly for the two that he had elected to take in charge, while the mother looked after the other three. I watched the birds constantly, and never saw

either of the parents feed a youngster that was under the other's care. There was something strikingly manlike in the male bird's distribution of the labor. He gave his wife the three requiring the most attention and took for his own share the two lusty youngsters.

One robin's nest which met with disaster was placed on the elbow of a rain-pipe which was supposed to carry the rain-water from the eaves of the Presbyterian Church at Highland Park. The chances are that robins never made a study of rain-water spouts. The experience of the ordinary householder is that water pours out of them at every place excepting where it is intended to pour out. The Presbyterian pipe was no exception to the general rule. When the robin's nest was well completed, "the rains descended and the floods came"; all the water from the eave-trough poured down the pipe to a point about a foot above the nest on the elbow, and then shot out through a hole and washed the little habitation with its burden of eggs to the ground below. We all know the poetical tale of the sparrow that built its nest in the spout. We know how the "bloomin' rain-storm washed the bloomin' sparrow out." We also know that when the rain stopped the sparrow went up the spout again and there fixed its habitation, awaiting another flood. I can readily believe this story of a sparrow. The robins who lost their home in that north-shore thunder-storm started to rebuild their nest on the same rain-pipe elbow before the pools in the street were thoroughly dry. Doubtless they felt that the shadow of the church made their home sacred from the attack of man, and they were willing for the safety thus secured to run the risk of more showers. Their second home was washed down within a week. They went elsewhere, and let it be

hoped were spared from the dangers of both field and flood.

Chipping sparrows, robins, catbirds, bluejays, and many of the other bird species which seek man's society do not resent a certain amount of prying into their household affairs. None of the birds named will think of deserting its home simply because you take a daily peep at the eggs or occasionally undertake to help the parent birds out in the matter of feeding the young. Confidence when once established is lasting. There are some birds, however, which occasionally build under the shadow of our walls who resent human curiosity and will desert their nests at the first appearance of supposed danger. The rose-breasted grosbeak frequently builds in the garden or in the trees that shadow the sidewalks. The rose-breast is a beauty. His life in the spring is one continuous song. As someone has put it, he wears a blush rose in his button-hole, and is the Beau Brummel of the birds. The rose-breasts build a flimsy nest. It has but little more stability than the nest of the mourning dove. They are as jealous, however, of approach to the little home as though it had taken a lifetime in its rearing. When a pair of the birds build near the house they must not be allowed to know that the nesting site has been discovered. If they see a person looking at their home they will often desert instantaneously. A pair of robins built a nest in a tree directly in front of the residence of a bird-loving friend. One day he saw some school-boys trying to climb the tree to get at the robin's nest. He drove the boys away. A few days afterward he discovered that a rose-breasted grosbeak was building its nest in the tree not far above the home of the robin. Then the fear came that the boys would come back and ravage both nests.

So the birds' friend took a hammer and drove a lot of wire nails into the trunk of the tree, thus precluding the possibility of climbing it. "I may lose the tree," said the nail-driver, "but I hope to save the birds." He was hitting the last blow with the hammer when the grosbeak came with a straw in its mouth. It saw the man standing below, dropped its building material, and fled. It never came back. It is something more than a pity that the birds cannot at first sight tell friend from foe. The robin sat on the nest all through the nail-driving without as much as fluttering a feather.

In the spring of 1899 I found the nest of a vesper sparrow in a Highland Park field. The bird clung to its charge until I almost stepped on it. Then it left the nest and gave an acrobatic performance which, had its motive not been known, would have been laughable. The bird was counterfeiting injury and an inability to fly in the endeavor to draw the supposed enemy from its treasure. This is a favorite trick of many members of the sparrow tribe, and that it is at times successful there isn't a doubt. The vesper sparrow that was performing for my benefit spread one of its wings out and dragged it along the ground as though it were broken. The little creature propelled itself with its other wing, which it beat violently against the grass blades. Finally, when it had reached a point about ten yards from the nest, it spread both wings to their fullest extent and skimmed the surface of the green pasture as though it were using a pair of sculls. Eventually it flew away to join its mate, who was scolding vociferously near at hand. So far from doing violence to the home of that devoted mother, I performed a service for her by removing from the nest the egg which a cow-bird had deposited there for the vesper sparrow to hatch. The hatching of this

parasite egg with the hatching of those of the sparrow itself would have meant, doubtless, that the young cow-bird, by its superior size and great greed, would have received the major part of the food to the sacrifice of its foster brothers and sisters. One morning, when on my way to pay a visit to the vesper sparrow's nest, I stopped at the fence and looked across the field to the spot where I knew the little home was hidden in the grass. The field was pasture-land, and a cow was grazing within a few yards of the sparrow's nest. It drew dangerously near to the grass clump where the bird was brooding, and in another instant I saw the sparrow leave the nest and perform exactly the same series of gymnastics for the cow's benefit that it had a day or two before for mine. Whether this mother bird thought she could lure away from her home, through motives of curiosity, this terrific horned beast or not, I cannot say, but the effort was made in apparent good faith. It is hard to be obliged to make a tragedy out of that into which comedy has so largely entered. Before the young vesper sparrows had been three days out of the shell one of the grazing cattle put an end to the little ones' lives with a misplaced step. Much more than a month later I saw a pair of vesper sparrows feeding four fledgeling young in the same field. I believe that the plucky little mother, rising superior to disaster, had succeeded finally in raising a promising family.

No bird better typifies the wild life of the woods than the ruffed grouse, or partridge, as it is commonly called. Flushed from its forest retreat in the autumn, the whirl of its wings through the falling leaves is like the whirling of a belted mill-wheel. The rush of its flight through the brush strikes a sort of terror to the novice sportsman who stands with gun in nervous hands, nor thinks of shooting till the bolt-like pace of

the bird has put it well beyond danger. This is the ruffed grouse of the time of the ripened shellbark and of the blood-red sumac. Then the bird's every effort is for self-preservation. In the earlier year, almost before the pulsing fullness of the spring has passed, the bird that flees in the fall at the approach of the despoiler stays to dispute his right to intrude, and if necessary to give him battle. Others have told the story of the attack that the female grouse will at times make upon the man who stumbles upon her brood in the heart of the woods. It has fallen to the lot of but few to witness the exhibition that this wild bird gives of mother-love and courage. It was my fortune once to have an experience with a mother grouse who was caring for a brood of ten or twelve downy young in the depths of a ravine on the government reservation at Fort Sheridan. There are not many ruffed grouse left in the country along the lake. The birds have been shot by market hunters and others until the hearing of a log drumming in the spring is an ornithological epoch. I had been at target practice on the Fort Sheridan rifle range, and was on my way from the firing point to relieve a man behind the butts. To reach the objective point I was forced to go through dense underbrush to the bottom of a deep ravine. I was just about to jump the little brook which flows at the base of the shelving ravine bank when I heard a clucking and hissing noise. Before time was given to me to realize what living thing was present, there was a rushing sound, followed by the impact of a heavy body against my knee. It was a case for a minute of both mental and physical stagger. Recovering enough to look down, I saw two feet in front of me a hen grouse bridling, and with her feathers ruffled up until she looked as big as a buff-cochin. At the same time I became





dimly aware that some little creatures, not much bigger than bumblebees, were scurrying for cover. In a second Dame Grouse returned to the attack. She made the onslaught like a game-cock. My knee was the objective point, and this she buffeted with her body and struck with her beak. I had a Springfield rifle in my hand, but of neither rifle nor man was that valiant mother afraid. Had she but known, it was admiration rather than resentment that was excited by her attack. She prepared herself apparently for another assault, and then suddenly changing her mind, she went whirring away through the clustering trees. She had held the attention of the intruder until her little ones had time to secrete themselves under the fallen leaves. I hardly dared stir for fear of treading on one of the innocents. I picked my way carefully, and when I reached a point half-way up the ravine's side, I heard the mother grouse calling her chicks to the shelter of her ample wings.

CHAPTER XI

SPRING ON THE KANKAKEE

The cup of the bird-lover is full who is permitted to wander along the Kankakee's wooded banks or to float in a boat on its bosom during the early May time. It is a varied bird-life that makes glad this river valley. The wood ducks nest in the timber, the golden plover dot the meadows, the sand-pipers bob on the river bars, the tree swallows dip in the waters, and warblers in thousands haunt the treetops. In the early morning hours river, woodland, and marsh ring with the bird chorus.

It was warbler time, the first week in May, when three of us having a common hobby left the great city and took the way which led to the pleasant river valley. My companions were of the gentler sex, but with a keen enthusiasm and an untiring perseverance in the pursuit of field study. Our train drew into the little village of Kouts, Indiana, where we found waiting a comfortable democrat wagon which was to take us the last stage of our journey, five miles across country to the banks of the Kankakee. It was after sundown, but some sparrow songs floated to us from across the fields and an oriole whistled good night from an elm. Our host had met us, and as we drove along through the deepening dusk, he told us that the whippoorwill had come. It was a bit of superfluous information, for at that instant, from a little stretch of timber at the side of the road, the bird he had named called to us softly. Its voice gained in volume as it

rolled out the syllables one after another. I have read in one of the books that William calls for his thrashing five times in succession, and then pauses for a while before he begins his plea again. My birds, like those of Dr. Abbott, are always doing something contrary to the books. That Kankakee whippoorwill certainly made no pause for breath until we were well out of hearing. At the time that I had read the statement that the bird rested after calling five times, I sought a whippoorwill haunt for the sole purpose of testing the matter. When darkness had settled over the wood, one of the birds began calling. I counted fifty-eight "whippoorwills" uttered in rapid succession. I gave up the task, firmly convinced that it is rarely safe to put down anything as a bird rule without making due allowance for exceptions.

Another Kankakee Valley whippoorwill sang me to sleep that night, and during the occasional wakeful moments caused by the newness of the surroundings I heard him still calling. The night bird's voice was mingling in my dreams with a note of sweeter substance when I woke to a consciousness that day was breaking, and that an oriole was giving it a jubilant welcome from a maple at the window. Enthusiasm took all three of us afield before breakfast for an hour with the birds. One of the soft maples in the dooryard, our host told us, had for four successive years been the home of a pair of orioles. He was firmly convinced that the two birds which were then at his door were his friends of other years. In the maple next the oriole home site was the empty tenement of a warbling vireo. My companions had visited the valley the year before, and had found the vireo nest when it held its treasure of eggs. They told me how the father bird relieved his patient wife of her household duties at intervals during the day, and how all

the while that he sat upon the nest he sang sweetly the warbling song that gives him his name. Somewhere in this habit of the vireo there is hidden a lesson for humankind. Not much searching is needed to find it.

The Kankakee flows along not more than a hundred yards from our farm-house headquarters. We started for the river bank, but found bird-life so abundant that we made little more than half the journey before the breakfast bell summoned us. The field sparrow, the little fellow with the red bill and the chestnut crown, sang his sweet note from the fence post and did not appear at all discouraged because his brother song sparrow was giving a much better entertainment within a rod. From a little patch of bushes in the damp pasture came the call, "Witchety-witchety-witchety," and in a moment a Maryland yellow-throat showed his black-masked face to us through the tender green of the foliage. The yellow-throat is a beauty, but one cannot say as much for his voice. There were some chewinks, perhaps better known as towhees, in the pasture, and one of them kindly sang for us. The towhees's song, it has always seemed to me, has just about volume enough for a bird of half its size. But then we mustn't expect too much; the towhee wears a beautiful suit of black, terra-cotta, and white, and he knows how to show it to advantage. He charms our color sense, and we forgive him readily for not being a nightingale.

The cow blackbird is despised above all feathered kind. It is a parasite, building no nest of its own, but depositing its eggs in the homes of smaller birds. The warblers are generally the ones imposed upon. They often seem unable to detect the deception, and hatch the egg and rear the cow-bird to a sacrifice of their own young. This habit is too well

known to be dwelt upon. The cow-bird, in the spring, has just one sweet note. That is to say, at times this one note is sweet. If the bird tries to continue the performance it fails miserably, producing something like the sound of a file drawn over a lemon-grater. As we stood that May morning listening for a repetition of the yellow-throat's "witchety," there came one liquid note from a treetop. In chorus we said, "Cow-bird." The next instant there followed note after note of liquid beauty from the same treetop, and shamefacedly we looked at one another and said, "Wood thrush." If greater ignominy can come to bird-students who have haunted the fields for years than to mistake the note of one of America's sweetest singers for that of the despised cow-bird, let it be named. The wood thrush forgave us for the insult and heaped coals of fire on our heads by continuing his song as long as we staid to listen.

The catbirds and the brown thrashers sang their medleys from the thicket. The Kankakee River country is a catbird and thrasher paradise. We saw more catbirds during that May outing than we did robins. The region affords the catbirds ideal nesting-places, and judging solely from numbers I should say that it will be many generations before their race is run. A swamp extending back from the river encroaches upon the pasture-land. We had not left the singing thrush far behind before we started a green heron from its swamp retreat. A lesser blue heron took flight a moment later. It is a much rarer bird than its green brother. As we were about to retrace our steps a great blue heron ceased its frog-hunting and flapped away leisurely over the trees. On the way back to the house and to breakfast, we crossed a foot-bridge. A male phœbe was sitting on a post near at

hand. Out of curiosity I threw myself prone on the wet sod at the side of the path and peered under the bridge. I thought I should find something there, and I did find enough to pay me for damp clothes and a strained neck. A phœbe's nest of perfect architecture was fastened to one of the beams of the bridge, with the mother bird holding faithfully by her charge even in the face of the intruder. Father Phœbe from his fence-post perch did not seem at all put out at the encroachment on his dooryard. While the inspection of the nest was going on he unconcernedly flew out, snapped up a fugitive fly, and then went back to his post. After each of us had taken a peep at the mossy structure under the bridge we bothered the brave little mother no more. Within twenty-five yards there was another foot-bridge, and on a cross-beam beneath another pair of phœbes had a nest half completed.

When the Kankakee overflows its banks and makes a broad lake of a part of the country and a marsh-land of the rest, this Indiana region is a favorite resort for gunners. Some of the water birds linger late into the spring, many of them staying weeks after the time that the law first gives them protection from persecution. Some of the pools in the meadows do not dry up until June, and there the hunter who carries an opera-glass instead of a shotgun has a fleeting chance to scrape acquaintance with strangers. We started out after breakfast to seek the marshes. The way to them was along a road which ran parallel to the river and through a wood that was musical with the voices of birds. The orioles of the Kankakee were a revelation to me. They were there in great numbers, and were found not only in the trees near the dwellings of men, but in the depths of the woods. I never knew until that May morning that an oriole could

scream. We had crossed the long bridge spanning the river and entered on the road through the woods, when from above our heads came a scream of terror. It was almost humanlike in its agony of fear. Looking up we saw an oriole pursued by a hawk. It was the oriole that was doing the screaming. I took the hawk to be the broadwing, though the identification was not certain. Its flight was lumbering and heavy, but it seemed to be gaining on its quarry which was straining every feather to escape. We watched the chase with an interest mingled with fear. Suddenly a tree swallow appeared. I don't pretend to say that the swallow had in mind the saving of the oriole, but save it it did, whether the act was one of kindness or of accident. The eye had trouble to follow the swallow's rapid flight. It passed between the oriole and the hawk, staying its course momentarily as though with a set intent. The hawk saw the nearer bird, and reasoning that the nearer must necessarily be the easier prey, it turned aside from its pursuit of the oriole and followed the elusive swallow. The oriole made for shelter, while the swallow, with doubtless an inward chuckle, increased its pace and left the hawk so far in the lurch that it gave up the chase and flew disgustedly back over the woods.

In the trees along the roadway we found the black-throated blue warblers, the black and white tree-creepers, the yellow warblers, and the fiery redstarts. These last-named warblers, which look like diminutive orioles, were lisping their incessant notes from nearly every tree. We heard the call of the cardinal in the woods. This bird is not common as far north as our Kankakee hunting ground, and one brilliant specimen which flashed across the road and disappeared in the thicket was the only one of its kind that we saw.

The woods ended and the marsh began. There was a pool at the edge of the timber, and about it were running two spotted sandpipers. When I was a boy these tiny waterside dwellers were called "tip-ups." The name fits them to a nicety, for their bodies are in constant motion, and look like diminutive teeter-boards; first the head is in the air, then down it goes, and the apology for a tail bobs up. This operation is repeated incessantly. Some solitary sandpipers were flying about the pool and the adjacent marsh. Finally, to our surprise, one of them lit on a fence post within twenty feet of us, and there stood fearlessly while we stared at it through our glasses. It is strange how quickly the game birds learn that the shooting season is over. Two weeks before the solitary would have given us a wide berth, even though we had nothing more harmful than field-glasses with which to bring it down. I wanted to put the bird to flight so that we could see its white markings to better advantage, and I picked up a stick to toss toward it. The missile got no farther than my hand, however, because my gentler-minded companions begged me not to abuse, even to that extent, the bird's confidence.

We flushed one after another three jacksnipe which were feeding in the marsh at the very edge of the road. They rose with the squawk that is translated into "scaipe" by most of the books. A few jacksnipe nest in these Indiana marshes, and thousands of them would make their homes here if the vicious practice of spring shooting could be stopped. The birds are harried daily during the mating time. They know no rest from dog or gun until they get into the far North. There is precious little sport in spring jacksnipe shooting. If

there must be shooting, it should be put off until the fall when the sport is as keen as the air.

A dark cloud was moving rapidly over the marsh. Suddenly its color changed to silver, and then as quickly it went to black again. It was a flock of May plover that had lingered late on this choice feeding-ground. The May plover is also called grass snipe and grass plover; neither of the three is its right name. It is the pectoral sandpiper. The birds go in large flocks, and twelve or fifteen of them are often killed at one discharge of the gun. When the dead and wounded have dropped from the flock, the remnant will often whirl about and fly back over the fallen comrades, only to be met with another deadly discharge. The wonder is that there are any pectoral sandpipers left to add life to the spring marshes.

We walked back through the woods and across the river bridge to a boat-house. There we hired a comfortable and safe-looking snub-nosed boat for a trip on the broad stream. The woman who rented us the boat said that notwithstanding her occupation she had never been on the river in her life, and in it only once. That once she fell in from the bank. She also told us, for she saw that we were bird enthusiasts, that she loved the birds, but knew very little about them. "There is one bird, however," she said, "to whose note I am never tired of listening, though I don't know the singer's name. The song is like the sound of the tinkling of the triangle. There, the bird is singing now"; and as she spoke the rich notes of the wood thrush came across the river. I think that those who have once heard the "tinkling" of the little musical instrument called the triangle will admit that the

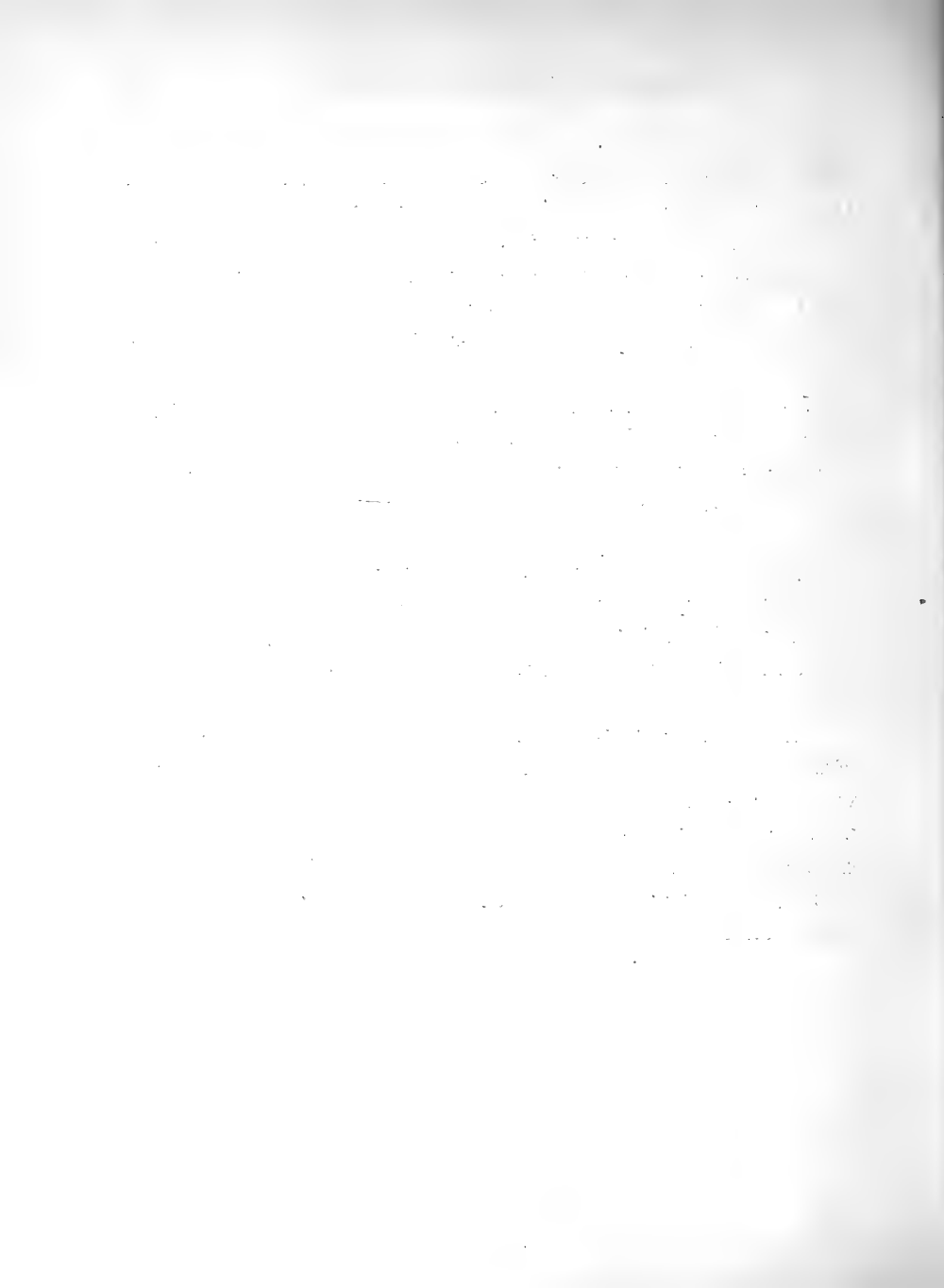
woman's description of the wood thrush's song cannot be improved upon.

We shaped our course up the stream. The Kankakee woods where they edge the river are the haunts of the prothonotary warbler, perhaps the most beautiful member of a notably beautiful family. The prothonotary owes its long name to the fact that it wears a yellow coat such as the prothonotaries, or court clerks, wore once upon a time. We had looked forward to meeting these warblers with a good deal of pleasure, but were disappointed to find that only a few of them had arrived from their southern winter resort. One pair, however, came so close to us when we landed at a picturesque point on the river that we had a golden opportunity in a double sense to get an adequate idea of the bird's ways and beauty. The prothonotaries have a habit of constantly flying back and forth over the river. Their yellow bodies are reflected in its smooth surface, and the observer has a double color treat every time the bird crosses. The prothonotary builds in a hole in a tree or in a decayed stump, after the manner of the bluebird, and the nests are only less interesting than the birds themselves.

The tree swallows of the Kankakee Valley believe that the customs of their ancestors are good enough for the descendants. They build in colonies in hollow trees, like their forefathers. The tree swallows that wander away into the haunts of men make their homes in bird-houses or in crevices in buildings. Nearly every group of dead tree trunks along the Kankakee River has its swallow colony. There were thousands of the birds flying up and down the river, dropping down now and then to dip in its waters. We passed many of them sitting upon the tips of dead branches or upon the



WARBLING VIREO.



scarred tops of stumps. The tree swallow's under parts are pure white, while its back and shoulders, when the sun strikes them full and fair, are a shimmering green.

We turned the prow of our little boat toward the shore and landed by some great trees under which the Indians once must have roamed. There two male redstarts gave us a diversion by having a pitched battle, first on a limb, then in the air, and then on the limb again. We stayed in the vicinity for certainly half an hour, and though we did not watch them constantly, I think that these little warblers, whose tempers are as fiery as their plumage, never once gave over fighting. We found a red-bellied woodpecker on one of the big trees. This locality is, I think, about its northern limit, though one careful observer has reported the presence of one of these woodpeckers in Lincoln Park, Chicago. We heard the note of the tufted titmouse. It was the same "Peter-peter-peter" that I had heard early in March in the southern Hoosier hills.

As the shadows began to lengthen, we floated homeward with the gentle current of the river. When the sun declined the wood thrushes found voice once more. Their songs attended us all the way to the farm-house. Perhaps the birds knew of their listeners' appreciation, and were moved sympathetically to sing until it was time for the vesper sparrow to close the day's concert,

CHAPTER XII

"FROM HAUNTS OF COOT AND HERN"

When the snow melts in March, and the spring rains beat on the land, the banks of the Kankakee River can no longer hold their burden of waters. The flood rises rapidly and spreads over the outlying meadows and woodlands. In Stark County, Indiana, the broadening river forms a considerable body of water known as English Lake. Summer comes before the flood recedes to leave great pools and morasses in its wake as reminders of its spring-time visit. In June these English Lake reed-grown stretches are "the haunts of coot and hern," of the redwings, the marsh wrens, and the rails. In the earlier spring great flocks of ducks, geese, and plover make a resting and feeding place of the reaches of swamp and open water. There is a world of bird-life throughout the whole English Lake section. Perhaps there better than any other place in the Middle West may be studied the habits of the water birds. A Chicago shooting club owns much of the marsh, and as all hunting is done under rules which have regard for the preservation of species, the birds still throng to the locality with the first touch of spring-time warmth or of autumn chill.

In the third week of May, 1901, four weeks after the shooting season had closed, I tramped and rowed through the English Lake section with Ruthven Deane, the president of the Illinois Audubon Society. It is something to be familiar with many birds; it is something better to know them all.

I learned much on that trip, both of birds and of methods of observation. Mr. Deane is closer to Nature's heart than most men, and of him she seems to have made a confidant. We reached the English Lake club-house just at dusk, but all the bird voices were not hushed. While waiting the call to supper we strolled down to the banks of the little flooded inlet which makes a water highway for the rowboats from the house to the river. A vesper sparrow sang to us as we walked through the deepening darkness. From the damp thicket on the further side of the inlet came the voice of the Maryland yellow-throat. He was as insistent in his calling as is the custom with his tribe when once roused to vocal effort, but even the yellow-throat's insistence gave way before the screams and scoldings of a pair of robins. I have heard robins raise disturbances before. They are often the common scolds of a bird neighborhood, but the performance of the pair that we heard that night rather outdid in volume of sound anything of which I had supposed the robin to be capable. It was too dark to investigate the cause of the trouble, and so the matter was put off until sunrise. The robins apparently wished to make it certain that we were impressed with their trouble, if trouble it were, for the last thing that we heard on closing the door of the dining-room behind us was a noise that was nothing less than a screech, and it came from both birds in unison.

Just as the sun touched the treetops the next morning we were out of doors. The song sparrow was attune, an orchard oriole piped to us from a maple at the doorstep, and a brown thrasher was singing somewhere in the wet thicket beyond the boat-houses. The robins were silent. I went directly to the scene of the disturbance of the night before, and soon found

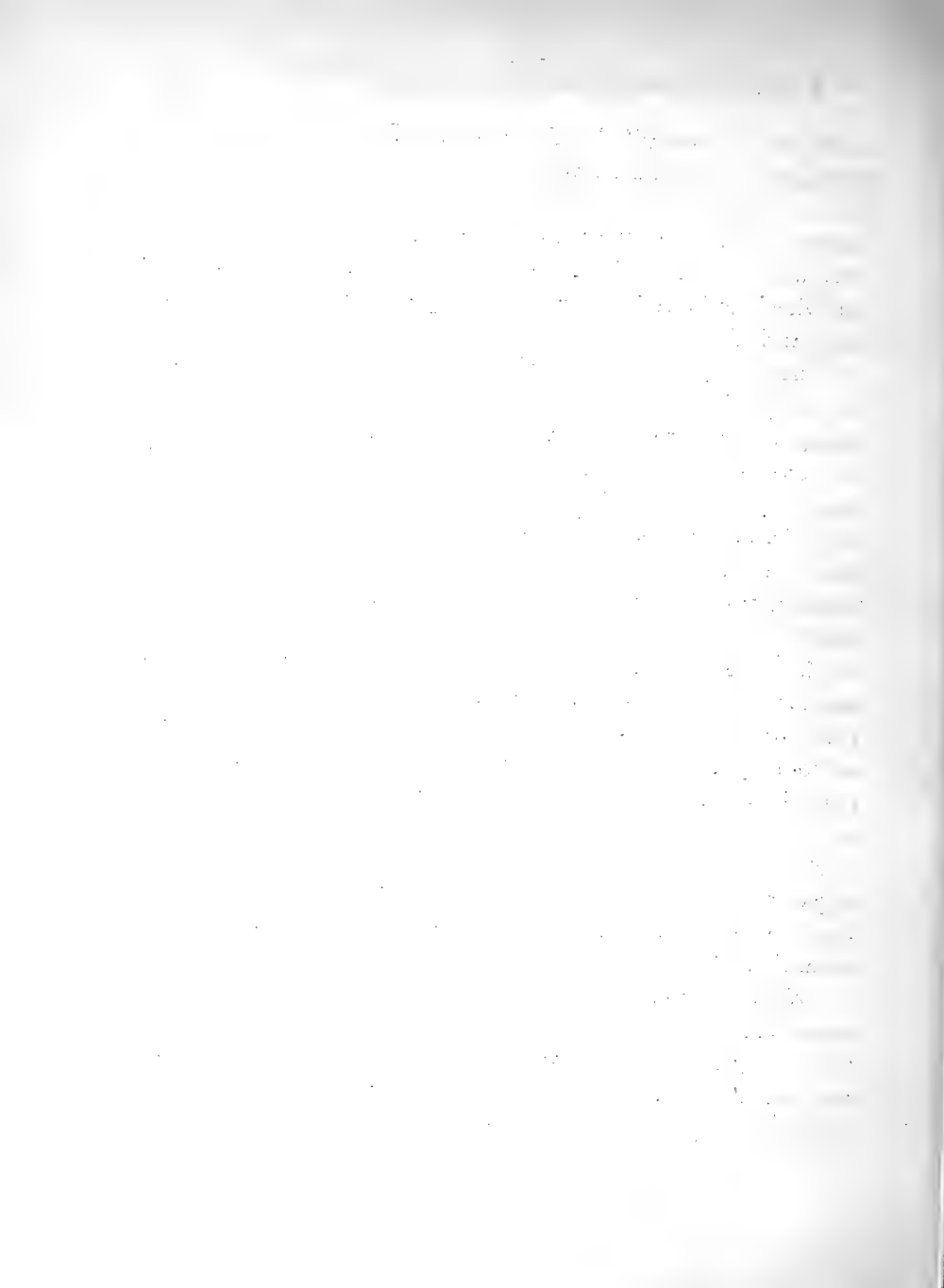
118 Birds of Lakeside and Prairie

Master Robin perched on a fence post with a big, fat worm in his mouth. It is barely possible that he had worn his voice out the night before, or more likely, he was afraid he would drop the worm, else he would have scolded me and perhaps sworn a little. I fully expected to find nothing less than a rifled robin household. The duet of the night before could hardly be accounted for on less tragic grounds. I soon discovered, however, that neither black-snake nor small boy robber had been about, for the robin, after looking me over for a minute, flew to a crotch low down in a maple across the inlet, and dividing his worm prize into bits, fed some concealed young. I went to the tree and climbing a few feet looked into the nest. There were four naked young ones within. They were certainly not more than eight or ten hours old. It is my firm conviction that the racket that the father and mother bird made the night before was their method of rejoicing that unto them several children were born.

The bird-lover's best time abroad is usually before breakfast. We walked that morning along the edge of the swamp and listened to the "fluting" of the redwings. In a little clump of trees, whose foliage was nearly full, we found the redstarts and the yellow warblers. There were other warblers in their company, but they gave us only a fleeting glimpse, and though we followed through the tangled thickets as they went from tree to tree, we had to give them up in despair. Warbler time is the time to try the bird-lover's soul. The elusive creatures invariably give the observer a crook in the back, and not infrequently give him a crook in the temper. A pair of doves flew by. We had heard their notes ever since we had left the house. There is something more than mournful in the dove's note. To me there is something that the chil-



MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT.



dren call “creepy” in the sound. Doves are abundant throughout the Middle Western country, but how long they will continue so is a question. Our wise legislators in many states have been putting these birds on the game list so that they may be shot and turned over to the cook. Before long the wise ones will be planning an open season for humming-birds and kinglets.

The doves were out of sight, but hardly out of mind, when my companion caught sight of a male bluebird sitting on a stump about forty yards away. The stump had holes in it, any one of which looked like an ideal place for a bluebird's nest. Presently the female bluebird appeared. She took a perch by the side of her husband. “In truth,” we said, “the birds have a nest in the stump.” Then we looked at them through our glasses and became more firmly convinced than ever that the nest was just below them, for the glass revealed the fact that Mrs. Bluebird had a fat grub in her bill. Soon, however, she left her perch and flew to a tree about twenty yards to our left. We said to ourselves, “Mrs. Bluebird saw us looking at the stump and so she has left it for another place in order to distract attention from her home.” Then it was that Father Bluebird also quitted the stump and took a station near his spouse. Both birds were restless and apparently anxious. They moved to another tree only a few feet distant, evidently trying to make us forget all about the stump and the little homestead that it held.

We were standing close to a small birch tree. My left hand was against its trunk while with my right I was using the field-glass. I took my eyes off the bluebirds a moment and saw that there was a hole in the birch-tree trunk within an inch of my thumb. I called my companion's attention to

it. He laughed, and walking over, looked into the cavity. There, snuggling down into their straw-lined nest, were four young bluebirds almost fully fledged and apparently about ready for their first flight in life. When Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird saw that their home was discovered, their trouble was great. The madame dropped the choice morsel intended for her young and called plaintively. We had no intention of harrying that birch-tree home. We backed away from it as quietly and as quickly as we could, and in a few minutes had the satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Bluebird pay her family a visit. If she had not recovered the grub which she had intended as a bit of breakfast for her offspring, she had found another exceeding quick, for we saw her feed the babes before the bushes shut off our view of the hole in the birch.

On our way back to breakfast we passed a pigsty. It was just like all other pigsties in the round world. There was plenty of wallowing room and plenty of mud for the porkers. The manager of the English Lake club-house had paid a visit to this pen early one morning, and there in the mud, in the very center of the circling pigs, was a cardinal grosbeak, singing his sweet notes to an audience that could do nothing but grunt its approval. Surely this was a literal casting of pearls before swine.

It was still early morning when we took a boat and poled our way down the grass-grown inlet toward the sweeping Kankakee. As we made our way laboriously along the little waterway we flushed a solitary sandpiper that flew away reluctantly from a choice feeding-ground. Glancing back, I saw the bird return to the spot before we were a dozen yards away. A Baltimore oriole flew over our heads, carrying nesting material. I watched the bird to see where it was going

to swing its cradle. It took to a treetop perch, however, and made no movement toward its nesting-place until we were well out of sight. It was Sunday, May 19th, and the river was still flowing with nearly even banks. We started down stream letting the current take us almost as it would. We passed a little rift, startling into flight a half-dozen “tip-ups” that circled the prow of our boat and made off up the river, peeping complainingly. We reached a patch of timber with plenty of deadwood still standing, but leaning heavily toward the river. There we landed, for we hoped to find the prothonotary warblers building in the rotting stumps. We found the birds in all the beauty of their orange dress, but if they had decided on homestead sites they kept their secret well.

Walking up the river bank a little way to the edge of the towering timber, we found a man and two boys fishing. They had had no luck. It was too early, they said, and there was still too much water in the river. It was while talking to them that we saw a moving streak in the water. The ripple with its shining trail came nearer and nearer, and in a moment we saw that it was a snake with uplifted head, that was swimming for the bank at our feet. I have never liked snakes well enough to care to scrape acquaintance with them. I have never been able to take well to heart Dr. Abbott’s teaching of the beauty and friendliness of the serpent tribe. The snake that was swimming the Kankakee that spring morning was surely four feet long, and it had a certain beauty of coloring that pleased the eye even while the mind loathed. The man of the fishing party said the snake visitor was a blue-racer and that it was “as pizen as a rattler.” We doubted the truth of this latter assertion, but in the face of it we could not but admire the cool indifference of one of the small boy fishers,

who sat dabbling his bare feet and legs in the water within a few inches of the place where the blue-racer was trying to land. The man made a jab at the snake with his fishing-pole and then struck at it with a club, but the reptile drew its slimy length safely out of sight among the spreading roots of a waterside tree.

Snakes are like misfortunes, they never come singly. We had left the little fishing party only a few yards behind when we came within an ace of stepping on a chocolate-colored snake about three feet in length. It was a hideous-looking reptile. It was blunter and fatter at the head and about the body than any snake I had ever encountered in my rambles. From the plump part it tapered off rapidly to a sharp-pointed tail. When Nature painted this creature she added a little dark ginger-root to the colors with which she had striped the hideous gila monster, and then had laid the pigment on thick. Neither of us waterside travelers that morning could give the snake a name, and though I have searched diligently since, I have been unable to find in the books anything that looked like it.

It is not a very far cry from the snake to one species of bird. The cow-bird is regarded by its feathered fellows in much the same light as human beings regard serpents. We hardly had banished the chocolate-colored crawler from our minds when we came across a cow-bird sneaking—there is no other word for it—its way down through the branches of a willow. It took only a moment to show the bird's object. A newly completed yellow warbler's nest, a perfect gem of bird architecture, was fastened in the crotch of some slender twigs of the willow, not more than four feet from the ground. The cow-bird was about to deposit an egg in the little down

structure and to trust to the goodness of heart of the warbler to act as foster-mother. I threw a club at the cow-bird and frightened it away. About ten minutes afterward I went to the willow tree once more, and there was the parasite again acting in the same sneaking way that it had at first. I frightened it away once more, but rebuffs of that kind count nothing with this bird. I haven't the faintest doubt that a visit to the vicinity of the warbler's nest later in the season would have shown two little gold-hued birds trying their best to keep well filled the maw of a young cow-bird whose bulk was greater than that of both foster-parents combined. The yellow warbler apparently knows that the cow-bird's egg has no right in its nest. At times the warbler will desert its home after the depositing of the alien egg. More often, however, the patient little creature will hatch out the egg that has been foisted upon it and will feed and tend the young cow-bird to the sacrifice of its own offspring.

On the river bank not far from the home of the yellow warbler we found the half-completed nest of a pair of redstarts. We first saw the female with a bit of downy stuff in her bill. She paid little heed to us and by watching her movements we soon discovered her secret. The nest was a dainty little structure placed about fifteen feet from the ground, close to the trunk of a small tree, where it was held firmly in place by two slender, upward-growing twigs. I have spoken elsewhere of the abundance of the redstarts in the Kankakee Valley. Both at Kouts and at English Lake I found them to be by far the most abundant birds of the warbler family. No one need regret their abundance, for they are useful in their lives and of a surpassing beauty of plumage.

When we had taken to our boat again and had drifted a

mile with the current of the stream, we turned to the shore once more and drew our little craft up on a muddy bank that separated the river from a great insweeping marsh, guarded on all sides by big native trees. We left the boat and plowed our way into the swamp. We caught a fleeting glimpse of a Louisiana water-thrush as we left the river bank; a catbird gave one strain of melody that ended in a sharp "meou" as he discovered us. Two or three elusive sparrows dodged in and out of the thicket at the edge of the marsh. The endeavor to identify a sparrow under such circumstances is one of the trying things of life. I soon gave over all thought of the sparrows, however, for my companion, knowing every bird-haunt of this bird-favored country, was leading me straight to a feeding-ground of the great blue herons. The swamp broadened out, the timber giving way to the right and left. Suddenly from the rank grass growth not more than thirty yards ahead of us there rose a great bird that flapped its huge wings, stretched out its great neck, and trailing its lanky legs behind, made straight for the sky-line at the tree-tops. Only a few yards beyond another heron, surprised at its breakfast table, left the well-furnished board reluctantly. One after another the herons rose before our advancing footsteps. I felt a little conscience stricken at having interrupted their feasting. We retraced our steps soon and before we reached our boats the herons doubtless were back at their repast of frogs, slugs, and delicate small fry, with which the marshes of the Kankakee River abound. I never before had seen a wild great blue heron at such short range. In first taking flight the bird is an awkward creature. It reminded me of nothing so much as of a man who is in a hurry to catch a car, but has to stop to gather up four or five bundles before

“From Haunts of Coot and Hern” 125

starting to run. The heron's bundles are its long neck, head and beak, and its two lanky legs. It seems to lose a minute's time trying to dispose of these impedimenta properly before it spreads its wings for the start.

We left the entrance to the heron's retreat and pulled our way up the river. Going against the current of the Kankakee means the mingling of some work with the day's play. The journey of ten minutes going down is a journey of twenty minutes going up. There are, however, plenty of bird excuses for stopping to rest. A small heron pitched on to an island in midstream, fully a hundred yards ahead of our boat. The island was grass-grown, but we succeeded in marking the spot of the bird's disappearance fairly accurately. We made up our minds that we would try to see how close we could approach before this wary bird of the bog should take flight. We kept in the open water until we reached a place abreast of where the heron had disappeared, then turning the prow of our boat toward the island, a few lusty strokes sent us ashore. The bird had gone into the grass not ten yards from the water. We searched the spot thoroughly with our glasses but saw nothing. I was about to jump out of the boat for the purpose of flushing the heron when my wiser friend told me if I jumped off into the mud I could never get out again. I was incredulous, but after I had poked an oar down into the black oozy stuff without meeting with the slightest resistance I concluded to stay in the boat. I had hardly pulled the oar out of the mud before the heron rose and made off for a treetop. It was a little green heron, called in many country sections “fly-up-the-creek.” It is probable that had not the protective coloring of the bird been so perfect we could have readily picked it out from its surroundings as

it stood in the lush grasses of the island. When the heron reached the tree toward which it flew, it took perch on a dead limb and there silhouetted against the sky made a perfect bird picture.

We left the green heron staring at the sky and once more pulled hard against the stream. Our destination now was English Lake proper, which opens out to the right and left of the railroad bridge. Beneath this structure the contracted Kankakee sweeps swiftly. By the time of the year of our visit, well into the month of May, the lake was a lake in name only, though the land in many places was still under water. About half a mile above the bridge we saw ahead of us on the open water a great flock of ducks. Our glasses told us beyond much doubt that the birds were blue-bills, more scientifically known, perhaps, as scaup ducks. We pulled directly toward the flock. What follows shows how quickly wild birds gain confidence after the shooting season closes. We reached a point well within gunshot of the blue-bills before they paid any attention to us. We had no advantage of cover whatsoever. A month before these same birds would have been up and off while the boat even to their keen vision had been but a black dot upon the water. We drew closer. One of the ducks rose and in another instant the whole air was awir with their wings. I was kneeling on the forward seat of the boat looking ahead through my glasses at the blue-bills. Suddenly I heard the squawk of a duck within four feet of me. I turned in amazement and found that the duck's cry, so true to nature, was coming from between the lips of my companion. He was calling the blue-bills. The birds heard that counterfeit call, and deceived completely, circled and swept by within a few yards of our boat. Wary as the birds

are, when once fooled they are fooled utterly, and too often to their sorrow in the shooting season.

On a mud bank beyond the reach of water where the blue-bills had been paddling we saw some birds flying, and moving about on the ground by turns. We succeeded in getting close enough to say good morning to them all. They were plover, known by the somewhat inelegant name of lesser yellow-legs. These birds, much sought after by sportsmen, seemed like the blue-bills to know that the shooting season was over, and that on this game preserve at least no one was to harm them. Near the yellow-legs we found solitary, spotted, and red-backed sandpipers, and the ring-necked plover. The birds were all as tame as chickens. We went ashore at a place where there seemed to be some certainty of a firm foundation for our footsteps and started on a hunt for marsh-wrens. We found none, but we flushed a few jacksnipe and took it for granted from the fact of their late tarrying that they were to nest in the English Lake country.

The snipe, the plover, the sandpipers, in fact all the shore birds and the deep-water birds with them, form one of the most interesting groups for the purposes of study. The birds are too little known to the student who is not likewise a sportsman. Most of them are with us only during the shooting season, when approach is difficult. Then again, the very nature of their haunts presents an obstacle to familiar knowledge. It is hard work to scrape acquaintance with them. Their friendship, if it is to be won, must be had at the expense of much mud, some wading and not a few duckings. If the legislators were wise enough to stop spring shooting, thousands of our shore and water birds that now go to the far North to breed would build their nests in the fields and

128 Birds of Lakeside and Prairie

marshes of the Middle Western states, and then there would be some chance to gain their confidence and to learn their ways.

I left the shore birds behind with a keenness of regret. I never before had succeeded, in a double sense, in getting so close to them. In the afternoon of that May day we went once more afield to see and to hear our dry land friends. It was soon forced home to us that all birds have their share of water, for a heavy rain-storm set in and drove us and the songsters to shelter. Passing through a bit of woodland on our way to the protection of the club-house porch, we flushed a drowsy whippoorwill. It flew silently and heavily for a few yards and then went to earth again. In a few hours' time, however, it was alert enough, for I am sure it was this bird that repeated its quavering cry again and again as a sort of a good by to us as we boarded the train in the dusk of evening and sped away cityward.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REACHES OF THE PRAIRIE

In the journey southwest from Chicago the traveler hour after hour passes over a prairie country. Nowhere, as far as eye can reach, is there a hill to hedge in these seemingly limitless fields. It needs no native of these parts to explain to the traveling stranger why it is that this great reaching plain is called the Grand Prairie. There is a grandeur apart from mountains, cañons, and rushing rivers. It is the grandeur that attaches to the thought of vast extent, unbroken and unrestricted.

The Grand Prairie is the home of the birds that love the level grass-grown stretches, the great corn-fields, and the low swales that hold their moisture even in the burning heat of summer. The meadowlarks nest in countless numbers all over the face of the prairies. The Western lark is a somewhat smaller bird than its Eastern cousin, and it is far more friendly. Go where you will on the prairies in the spring-time you will hear the lark's clear, sweet, whistling note. Sometimes the bird's music has a bell-like quality, but I have always been pleased to think that this bit of sweetness is for the special benefit of Madame Meadowlark, hidden away on her nest in the prairie grass. An attempt was made recently in the Illinois legislature to put the meadowlark on the game list. The farmer members said that the bird was too good a friend to be shot for pot-pies, and the bill never went beyond the first reading. I spent part of one winter in a wooded section

of southeastern Texas. Nothing surprised me more than to find the meadowlarks there in abundance, and making their habitation in the woods. The woods were open, to be sure, but the surroundings were totally unlike those which the lark seeks in its Northern summer home.

The horned or shore lark is another common bird of the open prairies. There are two varieties, the horned lark proper, and the prairie horned lark. Both of the birds occur in the Middle Western states. They sing on the wing, but their notes, while not absolutely unmusical, have but little to commend them to the ear. With one exception, my experience with these larks has been that, apart from the breeding season, they go in small detached flocks. The one exception was the sight of a flock of the birds flying above a great field about sixty miles south of Chicago. I don't dare venture to give an estimate of the number of individuals in the gathering. The old comparison of the swarm of gnats is too weak to hold. No flock of blackbirds that I have ever seen equaled in size this gathering of the larks. The birds were constantly going to the ground in mass, and then rising again in a sort of hovering flight. Every lark in the vast concourse was singing its twittering song. It was the last week in March, and before three weeks had passed the birds had separated and many of them were nesting. On April 15th I found a nest containing five eggs on the ground within a few feet of a pool of water, the surface of which was frozen. I flushed the lark from the nest, and after taking one fleeting glimpse at her egg treasures, I went hastily away. The bird was back covering the eggs before I had gone a distance of ten feet in my retreat. How the horned larks, building as early as they do, manage to bring up such a numerous progeny



HOUSE WREN.

in the face of perils of frost and flood is beyond my wit to explain.

The prairie-chickens and the quail are still abundant throughout the Middle West. In some of the states good laws have resulted in an increase in quail numbers, and the prairie-chickens in many sections fairly may be said to be holding their own. These birds live veritably in the shadow of death. They are shot ruthlessly, and yet they have learned to match their own cunning against that of man. They are in very truth game birds, and one cannot scrape acquaintance with them on the same terms with which he meets the robin and the bluebird. Nevertheless, that walk afiel in the cool of the evening will lack much when the whistle of Bob-White fails to come down the wind from the fence post near the corn field.

There are places in plenty on the Grand Prairie where birds that are not essentially field lovers make their homes. Along the tree-bordered streams, in the trees of the village streets, and about the farm-houses may be found nearly the whole range of songsters, with the woodpeckers, the flycatchers and the rest. It was while on an outing for the purpose of getting nearer the hearts of the prairie birds that I had an interesting experience with the members of a bird family, that I was going to say wouldn't know a prairie if they saw it. I stayed for a month in the early summer in a little village on the Grand Prairie. I lived during my stay in what was half hotel, half farm-house. At one time in the life of the proprietor it was his determination to have his place as hotel-like as circumstances would admit, and to this end he had put up a real lamp-post which held in position a steady light for the direction of possible travelers. Not many guests were

attracted and the light fell into disrepute; the wick was no longer trimmed and the match no longer applied. The post, however, was suffered to stand. It happened that it stood within ten feet of my ground floor bedroom window. The morning after my arrival at the little prairie inn I was awakened by a sweet song from without. I drew the curtain aside and discovered the singer. It was a house wren that had taken perch on the top of the lamp-post and was saluting the rising sun. The little fellow sang all the time I was dressing, and for the next two weeks I don't think that I knew five minutes of the daylight hours to pass, while I was in the vicinity of the house, that the wren's song was absent from my ears. He certainly took the palm for musical industry, and I am glad to record that he afterward proved as industrious in what some people may claim to be more useful lines, though he is a savage who doubts that music has its uses.

The lamp-post was surmounted by a conical-shaped tin arrangement. There were apertures at the edges, made so as to provide for proper combustion of the light. It did not take me long to find out that a pair of house wrens had pre-empted the tin top of the lamp-post for a home. I have said that the house wren in his morning solo was saluting the rising sun. He was doing nothing of the kind. He was singing to his mate, who, just below him, was busy keeping her eggs warm. Birds always sing for the benefit of their mates. I lay for ten minutes one day on the ground under a tall osage orange from the top of which a brown thrasher was singing his ravishing song. My only thought was that the thrasher was singing to me. I flattered myself. I finally saw a movement in the thick part of the tree just below the singer's perch, and in another instant I discovered the pres-

ence of the female. She had been there the whole time, and it was upon her that the brown lover above had been showering his vocal sweets. That experience taught me a lesson in humility.

It did not take me long to make a friend of the house wren. Perhaps it was toleration rather than friendship he extended. Here is humility again, for I cannot get over the brown thrasher experience. The wren would let me stand at the foot of the lamp-post with my head within three feet of him. After his first fear was over he would not stop his song at my approach. I cannot understand to this day how such a little throat could hold such a volume of song. Mrs. Wren seldom left the nest. Her husband would take food to her. He had the secret of the lurking place of many spiders, and his food-collecting was but the work of a minute. I do not think that the male bird once relieved his wife of the duties of incubation. She made no complaint as far as I could discover. The wren had charged me no admission to his musical entertainments but I found a chance to repay him. I saved his home from being carried off bodily by some village small boys. I witnessed the leading forth of the young wrens from the lamp-post home. They came out one at a time. It seemed as if they would never stop coming. Seven of them, one after another, took a diagonal course to the grass. The mother soon coaxed them to a woodpile about which they stayed for a week. There was perhaps something in the cabalistic number, seven. None of the little ones met with harm, though there were two full-grown cats on the premises. While the young were in the nest both the parents were kept busy feeding them. Not far from the house was a brick wall. Ivy clambered over a part of its surface. The wall

was half sunlight, half shadow, and it was the home of thousands of spiders. The wrens had discovered the insects long before, for it was from the direction of the wall that the male bore spiders to his sitting mate. I have seen it stated in the books that the wrens feed their young about thirty times an hour. My lamp-post wrens made a much better average than that. I learned from my host of the inn that the wrens had built on the lamp-post top for three years. I trust that the same pair will make music and kill spiders at the same old stand for years to come.

This question of the feeding of the young wrens brings to mind the fact that in many bird households some of the young grow much faster than the others. This has been accounted for on the ground that the bigger youngsters receive the greater share of the food, either through the possible favoritism of the parents or because the adult birds are unable to remember which of the offspring they fed last. It is my belief, based, however, upon only two observations, that the old birds feed the young ones impartially and in turn. In many human families some of the boys and girls are sturdier than their brothers and sisters. In these human families it will be found generally that the weaker ones get the more attention and the better care. There are reasons, doubtless, for individual cases of slow growth and feeble constitutions in bird families as well as in the families of the humankind. I once saw the fledgeling members of a wood pewee household ranged side by side on the dead limb of a tree growing out of the depths of a ravine. A bridge spanned the ravine from bank to bank and ran close to the treetop upon which the young flycatchers were perched. One of the parent birds sat on the limb at the head of the family line. Every minute or two

the parent would launch out into the air, catch a flying insect, return to the limb, and poke the morsel into the open bill of one of the young. As soon as another fugitive fly happened along the operation was repeated, but the old bird, as capture succeeded capture, invariably would feed the youngster whose turn it was to be fed. Not once did two insect morsels go down the same throat twice in succession. If one of the young received more food than another, it simply arose from the fact that some of the bug specimens captured were larger than others. In an hour's time the parent bird made forty apparently successful hunting trips. Several times either the aim was missed or the bird ate the quarry itself. It may be argued that it is an easy matter for a mother with her three children ranged in line on a limb to keep in mind the order of feeding, whereas when the youngsters are all jumbled up in a nest, and perhaps constantly changing places, the keeping the feeding order in the parent's head may be impossible. It hardly seems that we are giving credit for too much intelligence to a robin or a bluebird or a jay when we say that doubtless the parents know one youngster from another as well as any human mother knows the difference between Tom and Bill, or Maud and Jenny.

The mourning dove is one of the most abundant birds of the Grand Prairie. The farmers say that it dearly loves corn. The result of this claim of the farmer has been that the dove has been placed upon the list of game birds, and is now shot on sight in every Illinois field from Cook County to Grand Tower. The law granting the right to shoot the doves was passed only recently. That is why it is the birds are still abundant. It was always a source of wonder to the bird-student that the tribe of mourning doves was so great even under the condi-

tions of the law's protection. The bird lays but two eggs, and the nest is so poorly constructed that a heavy rain-storm frequently utterly demolishes it. The mourning dove's nesting habits are erratic. In some sections of the country it builds only upon the ground, while in other sections the nest is invariably placed either in a tree or on a stump top. One thing in favor of the perpetuation of the mourning dove's species is the fact that the birds generally nest twice in a season. I saw a curious thing once in a Grand Prairie orchard. A male mourning dove was feeding two fledgeling young that were perched on a limb not four feet removed from the spot where the mother bird was sitting on two newly laid eggs. I met the father dove frequently during the next week. He had led his charges away from the nest, but he was attending faithfully to the duties of feeding the youngsters and of teaching them to fly. The nest with its eggs was on a limb that had been broken away partly from the body of the tree. How the eggs were contained by the few wisps of straw and the twig or two that did service as a nest was a puzzle. As it was the mother had to be content that season with one brood, for a heavy wind broke the limb on which her second home was placed completely away from the tree trunk and sent eggs and nest tumbling to the ground.

In the same Grand Prairie orchard I found the nest of a yellow-billed cuckoo, which showed but little more evidence of a builder's ability than did that of a mourning dove. From beneath the limb upon which it was placed one could see the sky through the nest. There were four eggs in the ramshackle structure, and it is a pleasure to say that they escaped destruction in the storm that brought disaster to the home of the dove. The cuckoo loves caterpillars. When a



BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER.

father and a mother cuckoo have four lusty young ones in the nest, as was finally the case with this Grand Prairie pair, they will do more good in the way of caterpillar-slaying than will four pairs of any other bird species under the sun. There is something uncanny about the cuckoo. Its movements as it glides along the branches through the thick foliage suggest the wanderings of a restless spirit. The bird can make plenty of noise when it chooses, but when it is being watched it usually preserves a silence that strengthens the uncanny feeling that its movements impart.

There are thirty-five kinds of American cuckoos, so it is said, but only two of them, the black-billed and the yellow-billed, are familiar to those of us who search the northern fields of the Middle West. In general appearance the two birds are much alike, the main difference being expressed by their respective names. The yellow-billed cuckoo is much the more common in nearly all places. The chances are that you will hear the bird before you see it, for its note attracts instant attention. Do not expect the American cuckoo to say "Cuckoo." It won't; the utterance of that well-known note is left to the English bird, and to the little wood and metal creatures that poke their heads out of the tops of Swiss clocks every hour and proclaim the time. The cuckoo's note sounds almost exactly like the first four or five utterances of a stuttering person who is trying hard to twist his tongue into shape to say some simple word. When you hear from the heart of some thick-leaved tree a sound like "uk-uk-uk-uk-uk-uk-uk-uk," you may make up your mind that the cuckoo has stopped long enough from his laudable work of caterpillar eating to attempt to say a few words. In many farming districts the cuckoo is known as the rain crow, because

it is supposed to wax noisy just before a shower. I have known the bird to be a poor prophet, and one that soon became without honor even with those who hitherto had pinned to it their faith. I never knew the cuckoos to be so noisy as they were one July month in northern Illinois when the drought killed almost every green thing in the land.

CHAPTER XIV

G. N. SHRIKE, BUTCHER

One has to have something of the savage in him to enjoy thoroughly the study of the shrike. As a matter of fact, the close daily observance of the bird involves some little sacrifice for the person whose nature is tempered with mercy. The shrike is essentially cruel. It is a butcher pure and simple, and a butcher that knows no merciful methods in plying its trade. More than this, the shrike is the most arrant hypocrite in the whole bird calendar. Its appearance as it sits apparently sunning itself, but in reality keeping a sharp lookout for prey, is the perfect counterfeit of innocence. The great northern shrike is no mean vocalist. Its notes are alluringly gentle, and to paraphrase, "It sings and sings and is a villain still."

There is one compensation beyond the general interest of the thing for the student who has to endure the sight of the sufferings of the shrike's victims in order to get an adequate idea of its conduct of life. The redeeming thing is found in the fact that in the winter time the great majority of the shrike's victims are the pestilential English sparrows, whom every bird-lover would be willing to see sacrificed to make a shrike's supper, though he might regret the attending pain pangs.

My own observations of the shrike have been limited to the city of Chicago and to the fields immediately beyond its walls. For those unfamiliar with the subject it may be best

to say that in the winter season the shrike is abundant in the parks of the great smoky city by the lake, and that not infrequently it invades the pulsing business heart of the town. No one ever saw the placidity of the shrike disturbed in the least. It will perch on the top of a small tree and never move so much as a feather, barring its tail, which is in well-nigh constant motion, when the clanging electric cars rush by or when the passing wagons shake its perch to the foundation.

The great northern shrike reaches the city from its habitat beyond the Canada line about the first of November. For four years in succession I saw my first northern shrike of the season on November 1st, a day set down in the church calendar for the commemoration of "All Saints." It is eminently in keeping with the hypocritical character of Mr. Shrike, sinner that he is, to put in an appearance on so holy a day. From the time of his coming until late March, and sometimes well into April, the shrike remains an urban resident and harries the sparrow tribe to his heart's content.

As far as my own observation goes, the great northern shrike in winter does not put very much food in cold storage. I have never seen many victims of the bird's rapacity impaled upon thorns. Perhaps I should qualify this statement a bit by saying that I have never seen many victims hanging up in one place. I have watched carefully something like a score of the birds, and while every one occasionally hung up one of its victims, there was nothing approaching the "general store-house" of food, so often described. It is my belief that this habit of impaling its prey upon thorns or of hanging it by the neck in a crotch is one that is confined largely to the summer season, and especially to the nesting period.

The great northern shrike has been said by some writers

to be a bully as well as a butcher. I have never seen any evidence of this trait in its character. It does not seem to care for what some small human souls consider the delight of cowing weaker vessels. When the shrike gives chase to its feathered quarry it gives chase for the sole purpose of obtaining food. While the bird is not a bully in the sense in which I have written, it displays at times the cruelty of a fiend. It has apparently something of the cat in its nature. It delights to play with its prey after it has been seized, and by one swift stroke reduced to a state of helplessness.

Every morning during the month of February, 1898, a shrike came to a tree directly in front of my window on Pearson Street, Chicago. The locality abounded in sparrows, and it was for that reason the shrike was such a constant visitor. The bird paid no attention to the faces at the window, and made its excursions for victims in plain view. The shrike is not the most skilled hunter in the world. About three out of four of his quests are bootless, but as it makes many of them it never lacks for a meal. The Pearson Street shrike one day rounded the corner of the building on its way to its favorite perch, and encountering a sparrow midway struck it down in full flight. The shrike carried its struggling victim to the usual tree. There it drilled a hole in the sparrow's skull and then allowed the suffering, quivering creature to fall toward the ground. The butcher followed with a swoop much like that of a hawk, and catching its prey once more, bore it aloft and then dropped it again as it seemed for the very enjoyment of witnessing suffering. Finally when the sparrow had fallen for the third time, it reached the ground before the shrike could reseize it. The victim had strength enough to flutter into a small hole in a snow bank,

where it was hidden from sight. The shrike made no attempt to recapture the sparrow. It seemingly was a pure case of "out of sight, out of mind." In a few moments it flew away in search of another victim. The sparrow was picked up from the snow bank and put out of its misery, for it was still living. There was a hole in its skull as round as though it had been punched with a conductor's ticket clip.

It has been my experience that the great northern shrike hunts most successfully when it, so to speak, flies down its prey. If it gets a small bird well started out into the open, and with cover at a long distance ahead, the shrike generally manages to overtake and overpower its victim. If the quarry, however, is sought in the underbrush or in the close twined branches of the treetop, it generally succeeds in eluding the butcher. One of the most interesting incidents of all my bird observations was that of the attempted capture by a great northern shrike of a small brown creeper. The scene of the action was near the south end of the Lincoln Park lagoon in Chicago. The creeper was nimbly climbing a tree bole, industriously picking out insects, as is its custom, when a shrike dropped down after it from its high perch on a tree which stood close and overshadowed the one from whose bark the creeper was gleaning its breakfast. The shrike was seen coming. The creeper, for the fraction of a second, flattened itself and clung convulsively to the tree trunk. Then recovering, it darted to the other side of the bole, while the shrike brought up abruptly and clumsily just at the spot where the creeper had been. The discomfited bird went back to its perch. The creeper rounded the tree once more, and down went the shrike. The tactics of a moment before were repeated, the shrike going back to its perch chagrined and

empty clawed. Five times it made the attempt to capture the creeper, and every time the little bird eluded its enemy by a quick retreat. It was a veritable game of hide and seek, amusing and interesting for the spectator, but to the birds a game of life and death. Life won. I ever have believed thoroughly that the creeper thought out the problem of escape for itself. The last time the shrike went back to its perch the creeper did not show round the trunk again, but instead flew away, keeping the bole of the tree between itself and its foe. It reached a place of safety unseen. The shrike watched for the quarry to reappear. In a few moments it grew impatient and flew down and completely circled the tree. Then, seemingly knowing that it had been fooled, it left the place in disgust.

Of the boldness of the great northern shrike there can be no question. It allows man to approach within a few feet and looks him in the eye with a certain haughty defiance, showing no trace of nervousness, save a flirting of the tail, which is a characteristic of the bird and in no way attributable to fear or uneasiness. One morning early in March, when the migration had just started, I saw two shrikes on the grass in the very center of the ball-ground at the south end of Lincoln Park. They were engaged in a pitched battle, and went for each other much after the manner of game cocks. The feathers literally flew. I looked at them through a powerful field-glass and saw a small dark object on the grass at the very point of their fighting. Then I knew that the battle was being waged for the possession of an unfortunate bird victim. The birds kept up the fight for fully two minutes. Then, being anxious to find out just what the dead bird was which had given rise to the row, I walked rapidly

toward the combatants. They paid no heed to me until I was within twenty feet of the scene of their encounter. Then they flew away. I kept my eyes on the much-ruffled body of the little victim lying on the grass, and walking toward it I stooped over to pick it up. At that instant, as quick as the passing of light, one of the shrikes darted under my hand, seized the quarry, and made off with it. It was an exhibition of boldness that did not fail to win admiration. I did not have the chance to learn what bird it was that had fallen a victim to the shrikes' rapacity and had been the cause of that battle royal.

The great northern shrike, when it is attempting to capture a mouse, or a small bird that has taken refuge in a bush, hovers over the quarry almost precisely after the manner of the sparrow-hawk. There are few more fascinating sights in nature than that of the bird with its body absolutely motionless, but with its wings moving with the rapidity of the blades of an electric fan. Sharply outlined against the sky, it fixes the attention and rouses an interest that leaves little room for sympathy with the intended victim that one knows is cowering below. A mouse in the open has little chance for escape from the clutches of the hovering shrike. Birds, however, which have wisdom enough to stay in the bush and trust to its shelter rather than to launch out into open flight, are more than apt to escape with their lives. In February last I saw two shrike-pursued English sparrows take to the cover of a vine-covered lilac shrub. They sought a place well near the roots. While flying they had shown every symptom of fear and were making a better pace than I had ever seen one of their tribe make before. The shrike brought itself up sharply in midair directly over the lilac, and there it hovered on light wing and



GREAT NORTHERN SHRIKE.



looked longingly downward through the interlacing stems at the sparrows. It paid no heed to its human observer who was standing within a few feet and who, to his amazement, saw an utter absence of any appearance of fear on the part of the sparrows. They apparently knew that the shrike could not strike them down because of the intervening branches. They must have known also that owing to the comparative clumsiness of their pursuer when making its way on foot through and along twigs and limbs, they could easily elude him if he made an attempt at capture after that manner. Finally the shrike forsook the tip of the lilac and began working its way downward along the outer edge of the shrub. When it had approached to a point as near as the sparrows thought was comfortable, they shifted their position in the bush. The shrike saw that the quest was useless unless he could start them to flight. He tried it, but they were too cunning for him, and he at last gave up the chase, the progress of which actually seemed to humiliate him. He flew afar off, where perhaps the prospects of dinner were better.

I once saw a goldfinch in winter plumage escape a great northern shrike by taking a flight directly at the zenith. The shrike followed the dainty little tidbit far up, until the larger bird was only a speck and the little one had disappeared entirely. The shrike apparently could neither stand the pace nor the altitude, and the watchers, with whom the goldfinch was the favorite in the race, rejoiced with the winner.

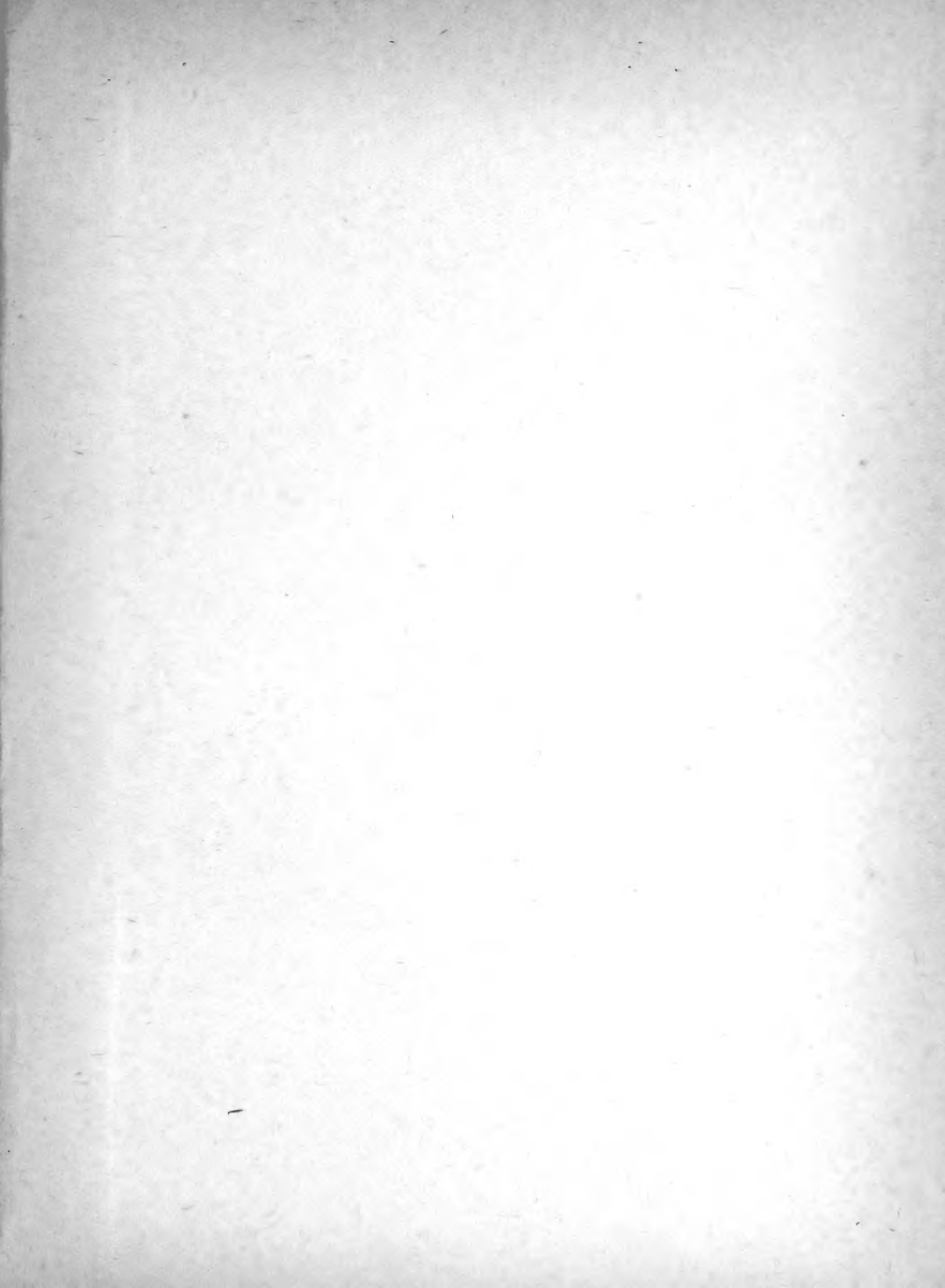
INDEX

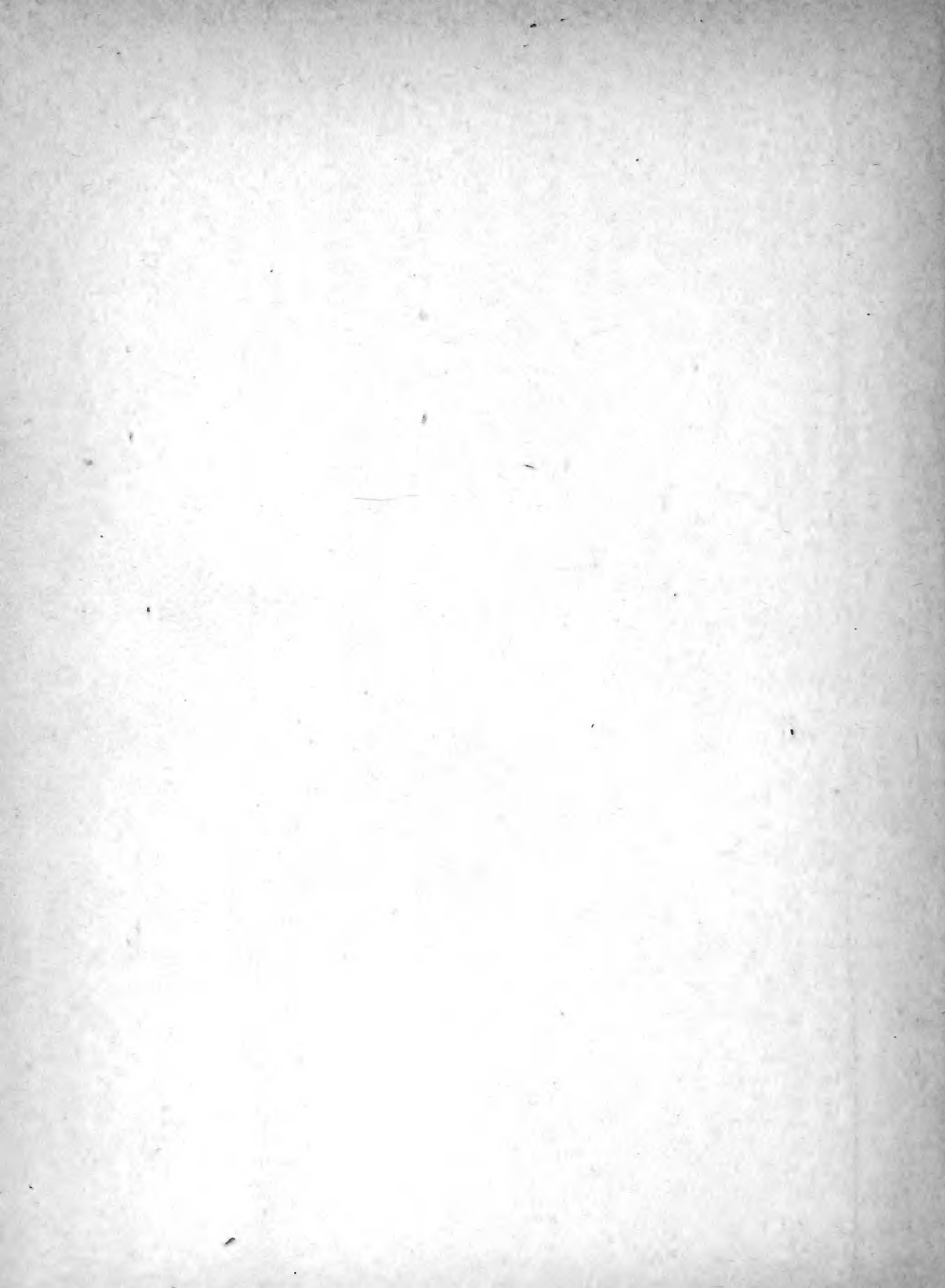
- Abbott, Dr., 52, 107, 121.
 Adam, 79.
 Aristotle, 63.
 Auk, Great; *Plautus impennis*, 17.
- Beau Brummel of the Birds, 101.
 Bittern, American; *Botaurus lentiginosus*, 14, 15, 26, 27.
 Blackbird, Red-winged; *Agelaius phoeniceus*, 21, 22, 44, 90, 116, 118.
 Blackbird, Crow; *Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*, 12, 38.
 Blizzard, Snowbirds in, 58.
 Bluebird; *Sialia sialis*, 13, 16, 40, 47, 48, 52, 83, 114, 119, 120, 131, 135.
 Bluejay; *Cyanocitta cristata*, 37, 50, 51, 53, 57, 73, 74, 80, 81, 82, 83, 89, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 101, 135.
 Bobolink, Albino, 24, 69.
 Bobolink; *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, 24, 84, 88.
 Bob-White, 131.
 Bunting, Black-throated; *Spiza americana*, 23, 88.
 Bunting, Snow; *Plectrophenax nivalis*, 58.
 Butcher Bird, 11, 69.
 Buzzard, Turkey; *Cathartes aura*, 46, 47.
- Catbird; *Galeoscoptes carolinensis*, 52, 53, 78, 83, 88, 101, 109, 124.
 Cedarbird; *Ampelis cedrorum*, 84.
 Cemetery, Graceland, 30, 78, 82, 85.
 Cemetery, Oakwoods, 78.
 Cemetery, Rosehill, 78, 81, 84.
 Chewink; *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*, 108.
 Chickens, Brahma, 48, 49.
 Chickadee; *Parus atricapillus*, 36, 37, 43, 44, 52, 58, 83, 142.
- Chicago, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 23, 30, 32, 43, 66, 69, 78, 83, 91, 115, 129, 139.
 Chicora, Steamship, Loss of, 58.
 Church, Presbyterian, Highland Park, 100.
 Church, Unity, Chicago, 84.
 Coot, 116.
 Cow-bird; *Molothrus ater*, 84, 102, 103, 122, 123.
 Creeper, Brown; *Certhia familiaris americana*, 142.
 Crow, American; *Corvus americanus*, 22, 34, 40, 41, 46, 50, 68, 84, 98.
 Crow, Rain, 137.
 Cuckoo, Black-billed; *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*, 84.
 Cuckoo, English, 137.
 Cuckoo, Yellow-billed; *Coccyzus americanus*, 84, 136, 137.
- Deane, Ruthven, 116, 117.
 Dickcissel; *Spiza americana*, 22.
 "Dishonor, Century of," 66.
 Dove, Mourning; *Zenaidura macroura*, 72, 84, 101, 118, 119, 135, 136.
 Duck, Bluebill; *Aythya affinis*, 83, 126, 127.
 Duck, Mallard; *Anas boschas*, 93.
 Duck, Old Squaw; *Clangula hyemalis*, 56.
 Duck, Teal, 93.
 Duck, Wood; *Aix sponsa*, 17, 106.
- Eagle, Bald; *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, 13.
 Emerson, 36.
 English Lake, Indiana, 116.
 Eve, 79.
- Falls, Niagara, 85.
 Farm, The Phillips, 88.

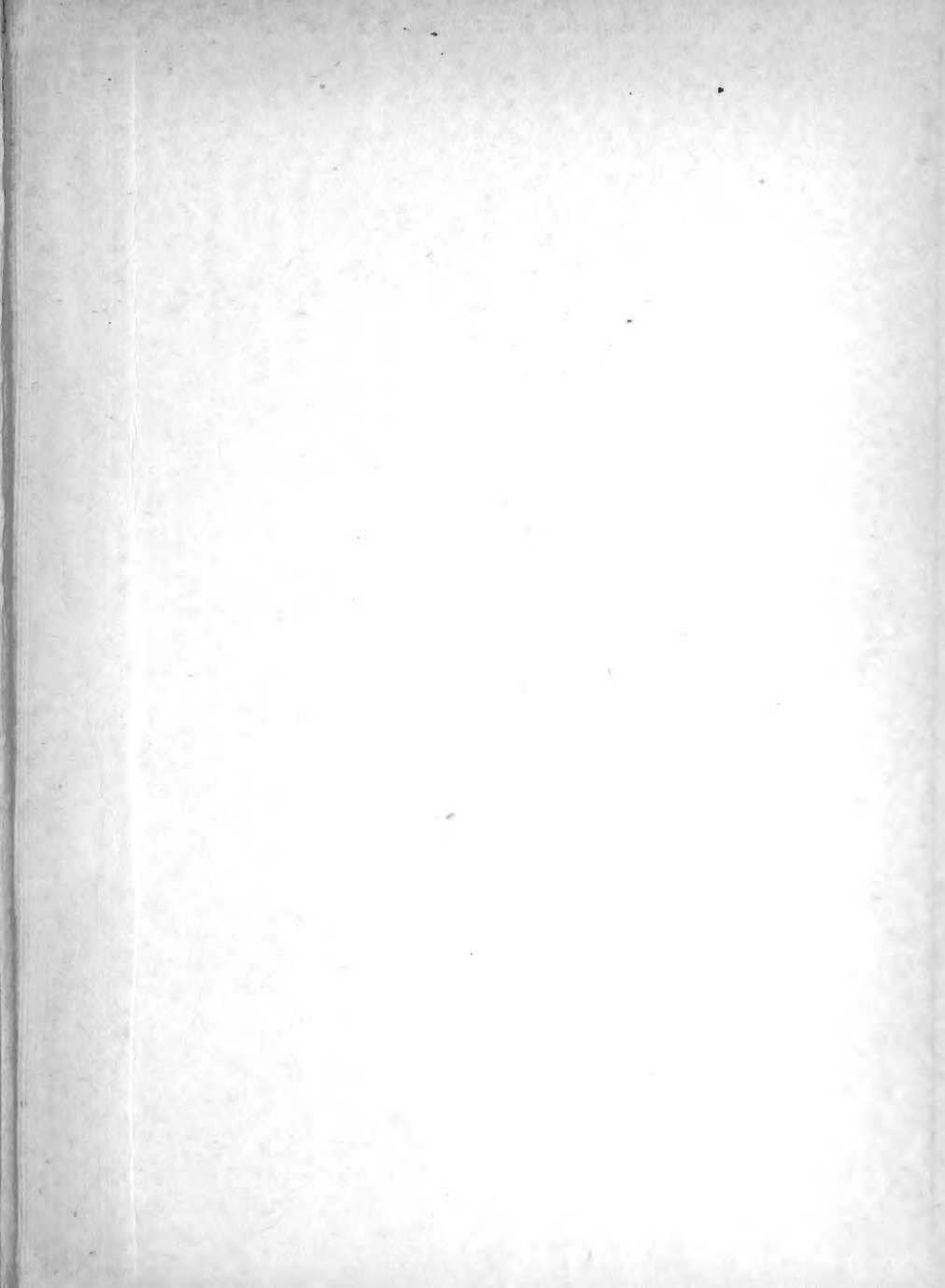
- Fields, In Winter, 50.
 Flicker; *Colaptes auratus*, 83.
 Flycatchers, 131.
 Flycatcher, Least; *Empidonax minimus*, 83.
 Fly-up-the-creek, 125.
 Fort Sheridan, 104.
 Fowler, W. Warde, 63.
- Gila Monster, 122.
 Goldfinch; *Spinus tristis*, 26, 45, 84, 145.
 Goose, Canada; *Branta canadensis*, 54, 55.
 Grackle, Bronzed; *Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*, 12, 13, 41, 78, 83.
 Grebe, Pied-billed; *Podilymbus podiceps*, 82.
 Grosbeak, Cardinal; *Cardinalis cardinalis*, 30, 31, 32, 38, 78, 79, 111, 120.
 Grosbeak, Evening; *Coccothraustes vespertinus*, 79, 80, 81.
 Grosbeak, Rose-breasted; *Zamelodia ludoviciana*, 55, 83, 101, 102.
 Grouse, Ruffed; *Bonasa umbellus*, 103, 104, 105.
 Gull, Herring; *Larus argentatus* Smithsonianus, 56.
- Halcyon, 10.
 Hartford, Michigan, 60.
 Hawk, Broad-winged; *Buteo latissimus*, 111.
 Hawk, Cooper's; *Accipiter cooperi*, 65.
 Hawk, Duck; *Falco peregrinus anatum*, 93.
 Hawk, Killed by barbed wire, 72.
 Hawk, Marsh; *Circus hudsonius*, 93.
 Hawk, Red-shouldered; *Buteo lineatus*, 34.
 Hawk, Red-tailed; *Buteo borealis*, 48, 49.
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned; *Accipiter velox*, 65.
 Hawk, Sparrow; *Falco sparverius*, 35, 36.
 Heron, Great Blue; *Ardea herodias*, 124, 125.
- Heron, Green; *Ardea virescens*, 83, 109, 125.
 Heron, Little Blue; *Ardea caerulea*, 83, 109.
 Highland Park, 20, 51, 68, 73, 102.
 Hills, In Southern Hoosier, 39.
 Humming-bird, Ruby-throated; *Trochilus colubris*, 13, 63, 84, 119.
- Illinois Audubon Society, 71, 79, 116.
 Indiana, Southern, 29.
 Indigo Bird; *Passerina cyanea*, 83.
 Inn, Prairie, 132.
 Island, David's, 75.
 Island, Goat, 85.
 Island, Willow, 10.
- Jack, a dog, 23.
 Jacksnipe; *Gallinago delicata*, 26, 112, 127.
 Jackson Park, 16.
 Junco; *Junco hyemalis*, 13, 35, 39, 57, 65.
- Kingbird; *Tyrannus tyrannus*, 22, 44, 83.
 Kingfisher, Belted; *Ceryle alcyon*, 10, 11, 71.
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned; *Regulus satrapa*, 62, 63.
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned; *Regulus calendula*, 81.
 Kouts, Indiana, 106, 123.
- Lake Forest, Ill., 94.
 Lark, Horned; *Otocoris alpestris*, 130.
 Lark, Meadow; *Sturnella magna neglecta*, 44, 84, 129.
 Lark, Prairie Horned; *Otocoris alpestris praticola*, 130.
 Lincoln Park, 10, 11, 79, 115.
 Love, Boy-driver's name, 45.
- Massacre, Chicago, 60.
 Mist, Maid of the, 86.
 Myrtle-bird; *Dendroica coronata*, 15.
 Mockingbird; *Mimus polyglottus*, 81.
 Mudhen; *Fulica americana*, 40.

- Nuthatch, White-breasted; *Sitta carolinensis*, 13, 33, 36, 37, 63, 64.
- Orange County, Indiana, 37.
- Oriole, Baltimore; *Icterus galbula*, 16, 52, 76, 83, 88, 107, 110, 111, 120.
- Oriole, Orchard; *Icterus spurius*, 83, 117.
- Ovenbird; *Seiurus aurocapillus*, 71, 84.
- Owl, Long-eared; *Asio wilsonianus*, 84.
- Owl, Screech; *Megascops asio*, 84.
- Parrot, Red and Gray, 70.
- Pewee, Wood; *Contopus virens*, 81, 82, 83, 134, 135.
- Phoebe; *Sayornis phoebe*, 83, 109, 110.
- Pigeon, Domestic, 20, 84.
- Pigeon, Passenger; *Ectopistes migratorius*, 17, 18.
- Plover, Golden; *Charadrius dominicus*, 106.
- Plover, Lesser Yellow-Legs; *Totanus flavipes*, 91, 127.
- Plover, Ring-necked; *Ægialitis Semipalmata*, 127.
- Pokagon, 60.
- Pottawattomies, 60.
- Prairie Chicken; *Tympanuchus americanus*, 131.
- Prairie, The Grand, 129, 131.
- Quail; *Colinus virginianus*, 52, 131.
- Rabbit, 52, 57.
- Rail, King; *Rallus elegans*, 91, 92.
- Rails, 116.
- Ravinia, Ill., 58.
- Redbird; *Cardinalis cardinalis*, 29, 30, 31, 32, 39, 41, 42.
- Redstart; *Setophaga ruticilla*, 57, 83, 111, 115, 118, 123.
- River, Concord, 36.
- River, Desplaines, 19.
- River, Illinois, 15.
- River, Kankakee, 106, 116.
- River, Lost, 29, 30.
- River, Niagara, 85.
- Robin; *Merula migratoria*, 13, 16, 29, 30, 31, 38, 42, 67, 78, 83, 89, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 109, 117, 118, 131, 135.
- Rose, Wild, 88.
- Sandpiper, Bartram's; *Bartramia longicauda*, 91.
- Sandpiper, Pectoral; *Tringa maculata*, 113.
- Sandpiper, Red-backed; *Tringa alpina pacifica*, 127.
- Sandpiper, Solitary; *Totanus solitarius*, 112, 120, 127.
- Sandpiper, Spotted; *Actitis macularia*, 112, 127.
- Sapsucker; *Sphyrapicus varius*, 33.
- Shrike, Great Northern; *Lanius borealis*, 11, 35, 69, 89, 139.
- Shrike, Loggerhead; *Lanius ludovicianus*, 84, 89, 93.
- Shrikes, Fight of, 143.
- Skokie, Songsters of, 19, 50.
- Snake, Blue-racer, 121.
- Snake, Chocolate-colored, 122.
- Snipe, Grass; *Tringa maculata*, 113.
- Snowbird, Slate-colored; *Junco hyemalis*, 29, 35, 64.
- Sparrow, Chipping; *Spizella socialis*, 83, 101.
- Sparrow, English; *Passer domesticus*, 13, 14, 15, 47, 48, 50, 69, 85, 89, 139, 141, 144.
- Sparrow, Field; *Spizella pusilla*, 108.
- Sparrow, Fox; *Passerella iliaca*, 13, 34, 35.
- Sparrow, Grasshopper; *Ammodramus savannarum passerinus*, 88.
- Sparrow, Lark; *Chondestes grammacus*, 25, 26.
- Sparrow, Song; *Melospiza fasciata*, 11, 12, 31, 75, 83, 85, 108, 117.
- Sparrow, Swamp; *Melospiza georgiana*, 15.
- Sparrow, Tree; *Spizella monticola*, 35, 65.
- Sparrow, Vesper; *Poocætes gramineus*, 83, 102, 103, 115, 117.
- Spiders, Food for Wrens, 134.
- Squirrel, 52.

- Stake-driver, 14.
 Stark County, Ind., 116.
 Stave-splitter, Hoosier, 33.
 Sugar-camp, A Search for, 45, 46.
 Swallow, Barn; *Chelidon erythrogaster*, 23.
 Swallow, Tree; *Tachycineta bicolor*, 86, 106, 111, 114.
 Swift, Chimney; *Chætura pelagica*, 67.
 Syringe, 88.
 Tanager, Scarlet; *Piranga erythromelas*, 16, 26, 52, 76, 79, 81, 84.
 Tea, Sassafras, 48.
 Tennyson, 17.
 Tern, Black; *Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis*, 87, 90.
 Tern, Wilson's; *Sterna hirundo*, 87.
 Texas, Meadowlarks in, 130.
 Thoreau, 36.
 Thrasher, Brown; *Harporhynchus rufus*, 52, 55, 78, 83, 108, 117, 132.
 Thrush, Golden-crowned; *Seiurus aurocapillus*, 71.
 Thrush, Hermit; *Turdus aonalaschkæ pallasii*, 34.
 Thrush, Louisiana Water; *Seiurus motacilla*, 124.
 Thrush, Wood; *Turdus mustelinus*, 55, 78, 83, 108, 113, 114, 115.
 Tip-up, 112, 121.
 Titmice, 43.
 Titmouse, Tufted; *Parus bicolor*, 43, 115.
 Torrey, Bradford, 51.
 Towhee; *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*, 84, 108.
 Veery; *Turdus fuscescens*, 34.
 Vireo, Red-eyed; *Vireo olivaceus*, 57, 83.
 Vireo, Warbling; *Vireo gilvus*, 107.
 Vulture, Turkey; *Cathartes aura*, 46, 47.
 Warbler, Black and White; *Mniotilta varia*, 111.
 Warbler, Black-throated Blue; *Dendroica caerulescens*, 111.
 Warbler, Black-throated Green; *Dendroica virens*, 110.
 Warbler, Cape May; *Dendroica tigrina*, 15.
 Warbler, Cerulean; *Dendroica caerulea*, 16.
 Warbler, Maryland Yellow-throat; *Geothlypis trichas*, 38.
 Warbler, Prothonotary; *Prothonotaria citrea*, 114, 121.
 Warbler, Yellow; *Dendroica æstiva*, 16, 57, 83, 111, 118, 122, 123.
 Whip-poor-will; *Antrostomus vociferus*, 106, 107, 128.
 Woodcock; *Philohela minor*, 16, 82.
 Woodpecker, Artic Three-toed; *Picoides arcticus*, 62.
 Woodpecker, Downy; *Dryobates pubescens*, 52, 54, 61, 62.
 Woodpecker, Hairy; *Dryobates villosus*, 61.
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied; *Melanerpes carolinus*, 44, 115.
 Woodpecker, Red-headed; *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, 42, 43, 52, 61, 75, 76, 83.
 Woods, Hamilton's, 51.
 Worth, Village of, 87.
 Wren, House; *Troglodytes aedon*, 83, 132, 133.
 Wren, Long-billed Marsh; *Cistothorus palustris*, 91.
 Wrens, Marsh, 116, 127.
 Yellow Throat, Maryland; *Geothlypis trichas*, 108, 109, 117.







SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIES



3 9088 00054 5137